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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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ON THE HEIGHTS

A NOVEL

BY

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

TRANSLATED BY
SIMON ADLER STERN



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1907

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ON THE HEIGHTS.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY mass was being celebrated in the chapel attached to the royal summer palace.

The palace stood on a slight eminence in the center of the park. The eastern slope of the hill had been planted with vineyards, and its crest was covered with mighty, towering beeches. The park abounded with maples, plane-trees and elms, with their rich foliage, and firs of various kinds, while the thick clusters of needles on the fir-leaved mountain pine showed that it had become acclimated. On grassy lawns there were solitary tall pines of perfect growth. A charming variety of flowers and leaf plants lent grace to the picture which, in all its details, showed evidence of artistic design and exquisite taste.

The paths were neatly kept. The flowers were sparkling with the dews of morning; birds were singing and the air was laden with the fragrant perfume of the new-mown grass. Swans, and rare varieties of ducks from foreign lands, were swimming in the large lake, on the banks of which the bright-hued flamingo might also have been seen. The fountain in the center of the lake sent its waters to such a height that they were lost in spray.

A clear mountain brook, running between alders and weeping-willows, and under many a rustic bridge, emptied into the lake, flowing thence through the valley until it reached the river, bright glimpses of which might here and there be caught through openings in the shrubbery.

Tables, chairs and benches of graceful form had been placed under the trees and at various points that commanded a fine prospect.

Seated near the chapel there was a man of impressive appearance. His dress betokened scrupulous care. His thick hair was as white as his cravat. His eyes were blue and sparkling, and full of youthful fire. He looked out upon the broad landscape, the valley crowded with fruit-trees, the near-lying hills, and the mountain beyond, whose lines stood out in bold relief against the blue sky above. He had a book in his hand, but now laid it aside and drank in the peaceful influences of the scene before him.

The great door of the chapel was open: the mighty sounds of the organ were heard; a soft cloud of incense floated out on the morning air and then vanished into space.

This impressive-looking man was the king's physician, Doctor Gunther, who, being a Protestant, had not attended mass.

Just then, a beautiful woman, carrying an open sunshade, stepped out from the veranda which was almost concealed by trellised vines. She wore a full, white robe, and her headdress was a simple morning cap with blue ribbons. Her bright, rosy face beamed with youth and beauty; her hair was of a golden hue and she seemed the very incarnation of glorious day.

The doctor, hearing the rustling of her dress, had at once advanced and made his obeisance.

"Good-morning, doctor!" said the lady, whose two female companions had kept a few steps to the rear. Her voice was not clear and bright, but suggestive of the soulful violoncello-tone which is more properly the vehicle of intense and fervent feeling, than of loud-voiced joy.

"What a charming day!" continued the lady; "and yet, for that very reason, doubly sad to those who are obliged to pass it in a sick-room. How is our dear Countess Brinkenstein?"

"The countess, may it please Your Majesty, may safely take the air for an hour to-day."

"I'm delighted to hear you say so. Sadness and sickness should indeed both be unknown in this lovely spot."

"The countess must regard herself as doubly fortunate, now that she is able to perform the interesting duties that await her."

"Speak softly," suddenly said the queen, for the sounds of the organ had ceased; the time of the consecration had arrived. "Ah, dear doctor, I should like to confide a secret to you."

The other ladies stepped aside, while the queen and the doctor walked up and down on the open space in front of the chapel.

"From one's physician, nothing should be kept concealed," said the doctor; "Your Majesty credited me, not long since, with the possession of a stethoscope by means of which I could note the movements of the soul itself."

"Yes," replied the queen, her face mantled with blushes, "I've already thought of applying to you for ghostly advice, but that were impracticable; such matters I must settle for myself. But I've a request to make of you as the physician."

"Your Majesty has but to command—"

"No, that can't be done in this instance. What I meant was—"

At that moment, the bell began to toll, and the king came out of the chapel. He wore the simple dress of a citizen and was without decorations of any kind. He was followed by the gentlemen and ladies of the court, the former of whom were also in citizen's dress, and, for the greater part, wore the picturesque costume of the mountaineers of that region.

The king was a man of stately appearance and erect bearing. He bowed to the queen from afar, and hastened forward to meet her. The ladies and gentlemen composing his train remained in the background exchanging kindly greetings. The king addressed a few words to the queen, whereat she smiled; he, too, seemed happy, and, offering her his arm, led her toward the pavilion. The ladies and gentlemen followed, indulging in cheerful and unconstrained conversation by the way.

A young lady, leaving the rest of the party, joined the doctor and grasped his hand most cordially. She was of

a tall and graceful figure; her hair and eyes were brown. She wore a simple, light-colored summer dress and a loose jacket which was open and revealed the full chemisette. A leather girdle studded with steel buttons encircled her waist. Her movements were easy and graceful; her expression, half earnest, half mischievous. "Might I ask," said she, addressing the doctor, "the name of the book you've found worth reading on this lovely morning?"

"It was well worth reading, although, to tell the truth, I've not opened it," replied the doctor, while he handed the little book to her. It was Horace.

"Oh, it's Latin!" said the lady. Her voice was as clear and bold as that of a chaffinch. "And this, I suppose, is your mass."

The doctor briefly alluded to the success with which the ancient writers had compressed so many weighty and enduring thoughts into so small a volume.

The party entered the saloon, seating themselves as best pleased them, for the order of rank or precedence was not insisted on at breakfast. They were in the country and, with their uniforms, had laid aside many of the vexatious requirements of etiquette.

There is nothing more cheerful than a gay and unconstrained party at breakfast. All are still full of the new strength that refreshing sleep has lent them; society succeeds to solitude; and the spirits of all seem affected by the soft, dewy morn.

There were no servants at breakfast. The ladies waited on the company, which was almost as free and unconstrained as a family party. The doctor drank nothing but tea which he himself prepared. The lady with the brown hair invited herself to a seat next to him and poured out the tea for him. At her left, sat Colonel Von Bronnen, the king's adjutant-general, and the only one, in fact, who did not seem to miss his uniform.

The party seemed in undress, mentally as well as physically, and there was much loud and confused talking.

"Dear me! It's Sunday!" said the young lady with the brown hair.

Uproarious laughter greeted her remark; and when the queen inquired as to the cause of so much merriment, the doctor informed her of the startling discovery which had just been made by Countess Irma von Wildenort. The queen smiled.

"I had thought," said the king, addressing the countess and at the same time lighting his cigar—he was the only one who smoked in the saloon—"that with you every day was Sunday."

"Yes, Your Majesty, but only since I've had the honor of being here. At the convent, Sunday was the only day on which we had cake, whilst here we have cake every day; and so I am obliged to use some other means to find out which is Sunday."

Von Schnabelsdorf, who had recently visited Spain on service of a diplomatic nature and was now awaiting orders, was sitting opposite the doctor. Addressing his conversation to the latter, he remarked that a friend of his who lived in Madrid had written a highly interesting work, to which he, also, had contributed a few ideas. It was soon to appear, and its subject was "Sunday," or rather "The Sabbath."

The king had overheard his remarks and inquired as to what these ideas were. Schnabelsdorf replied that as seven corresponded with the quarter of the lunar month, it was a natural division, and that the institution of the Sabbath was older than all positive religions. He had apt quotations to support every statement and did not forget to lug in the names of his distinguished friends.

Von Schnabelsdorf's learned discourse failed to make a deep impresssion on the company, which continued in its cheerful vein until the queen rose, beckoning the doctor to follow. The king offered her his arm and conducted her to a lovely seat under a weeping ash, on the slope of the lawn.

It was delightful to behold this royal pair, so tall and stately; and the queen was doubly beautiful, for another life was budding within her own.

The queen seated herself and the king sat down beside her. Without waiting for orders, the doctor drew up his chair and joined them.

"Yes," said the queen, "I must speak to you about it; I must tell you of a pain—"

"Perhaps I had better withdraw," said the king.

"No, you must remain. Once more, I ask you; if God grants me health, may I not nurse the child that is to be mine?"

An almost imperceptible glance from the king informed the doctor what answer he was to make to the queen.

"I have already had the honor of acquainting Your Majesty with my opinion of the superstitious belief that the mere performance of maternal duties preserves the mother's beauty. Your wish is inspired by a feeling which, in itself, is beautiful. But, both for your own sake and that of the child, it were impossible to accede to it. The duties of a queen, the demands of etiquette, the need of your presence at court and the various emotions which these employments must necessarily occasion, render it out of the question. A high state of development has effects upon the nervous system, which effects, being transmitted to the child, must cling to it for life."

"I beg you, dear Mathilde," added the king, "to avoid distressing yourself. Consider the prince's welfare."

"Don't always talk of a prince. Promise me that you will be just as happy, if it be a princess—"

"Just as happy! No, that were impossible. I can't control my feelings to that extent. But this I can promise you—if you and the child are well, I shall be happy for all."

"Well, then, let a nurse be brought:—even now, I envy her the child's affectionate glances and hearty caresses!"

"And what is the sorrow you were complaining of?"

"The thought of depriving another child of its mother troubles my conscience. Even if thousands have done the same thing time and time again, he who commits a wrong, sins for himself and as deeply as if it were the first time the sin were ever committed. Yet, I submit. But I shall insist on one thing: the foster-mother of my child must be an honest married woman and must belong to a respectable family. I could never silence my con-

science if I were to deprive a child, already wretched enough, of its all—its mother! In this I am perfectly indifferent to worldly regulations and prescribed forms. Is the poor, forlorn child, born into a hostile world, to be robbed of the only source of love yet left it? And even if we take an honest married woman, we will be depriving a child of its mother and inflicting an injury upon a being that we do not even know. Ah! how hard it is! In spite of our knowing better, we are yet forced to commit wrong. However, I shall submit to necessity. But the child that we take from its mother will be cared for by her family, has a father and, perhaps, even a kind grandmother and affectionate brothers and sisters. A hospitable roof will shelter its infant head—”

“Your Majesty,” exclaimed the doctor, with an outburst of enthusiasm, “at this very moment prayers are being offered up for you in thousands of churches, and myriad voices are saying: ‘Amen’!”

“Great God, what duties are thus imposed! One had needs be more than human to bear the charge—it crushes me to the earth.”

“It should elevate instead of depressing you. At this very moment the breath issuing from millions of lips forms a cloud that supports you. True humanity is best shown when those who are prosperous and happy and therefore need no assistance from others, protect the suffering instead of putting them away from them. The effect of such a mood upon the child whose heart throbs beneath that of its mother is one of nature’s mysteries. This child must needs become a noble, beautiful being, for its mother has instilled purest philanthropy into it before its birth.”

The king, who had taken the queen’s hand in his, now said:

“And so you really know nothing of the law. It isn’t merely a family law that the princes and princesses of our house must be born in the royal palace—and for which reason, we shall return to the city to-morrow—but it is also a law of the court that the nurse of a prince must be a married woman.”

“Great Heavens! And how I’ve been tormenting

myself. In the future I shall think better of the customs of the Court, since I find there are such beautiful ones among them."

"From the depths of your soul, Your Majesty has given new life to this law," interposed the doctor, "a law is neither free nor sacred until it has become a living truth to us."

"Very pretty, and true besides," said the King. He dropped his cigar, and after looking for it for a little while, said: "Excuse me, doctor, but wouldn't you be kind enough to have cigars brought for us?"

The doctor went into the house and, after he had left, the King said:

"Pray tell me, Mathilde, was that all that troubled you? I have, for some time past, observed that there's something on your mind—"

"Yes, there is something on my mind, but I can't speak of it, until it becomes an actual truth. It's nothing but love for you; pray don't ask me more at present. You'll soon know all."

When the doctor returned, he found the king alone, and sitting under the ash. The queen had withdrawn.

"Was the compliment you've just paid the Queen prompted by professional considerations?" asked the king, with lowering eye.

"No, Your Majesty. I spoke sincerely and from conviction."

The king remained silent for a long time, his eyes resting on the ground. At last he arose and, moving his hand as if putting something far away from him, said:

"Well, the queen wishes the nurse to be a young woman from the Highlands and of a respectable family. Is there time enough left for you to journey there and select one? Are you not a native of the Highlands? That were—but no, you must not go now. Send Doctor Sixtus; give him precise instructions, and let him go from village to village. He can propose several and you can select the best of them; the others can be sent home with a gratuity, and—but act on your own judgment; only, don't fail to send the doctor off this very day "

"Your Majesty's wishes shall be obeyed."

CHAPTER II.

“HOW radiant you look!” said Countess Irma, as she met the doctor.

“Perhaps I do,” he replied, “for I’ve just beheld that divine sight,—a heart overflowing with pure love of its fellow-beings;—but excuse me for a moment!” he said, interrupting himself and leaving the countess, while he went into an adjoining apartment and dispatched a telegram to Doctor Sixtus, instructing him to prepare himself for an eight days’ journey, and to come to the summer palace forthwith. He then returned to the countess, to whom he gave an account of what had happened.

“Shall I tell you what I think?” asked the countess.

“You know very well that none dare say you ‘nay’.”

“Well, then, I can’t help thinking that it was far better in olden times; for then royal children were born in some lonely, out-of-the-way palace, as quietly as if it were to be kept a secret—”

The doctor interrupted her: “You are indeed a true child of your father. For, although my dear friend Eberhard was full of strange fancies during his younger years, he would at times manifest sudden and surprising diffidence.”

“Ah, do tell me of my father! I know so little about him.”

“I’ve known nothing of him for many years. Of course you know that he has broken with me, because I am at court; but, in the olden times, in our youthful, enthusiastic days—”

“Then you, too, were once enthusiastic!”

“I was; but not to so great a degree as your father. When I see you, it seems as if his ideal had become realized. In those days, when I was a young army surgeon, and he a still younger officer, we would indulge in fantasy pictures of the future, and what it might have in

store for us. He never thought of a beloved one, or a wife, but would at one bound, as it were, clear all that lay between, and indulge himself with brain pictures of a child; a daughter, fresh, tender and lovely beyond comparison. And now, when I behold you, I look upon his ideal."

"And so my father's only ideal was a child?" asked Irma with pensive air, and looking earnestly into the doctor's eyes, "and yet for all that, he left his children to grow up among strangers, and all that I know of him I am obliged to learn from the lips of others. But I don't care to speak of myself at present, dear doctor. I have a presentiment of the queen's secret. I think I know what makes her so quiet and reserved."

"My dear child," said the doctor, "if you really have a presentiment,—and that, moreover, in regard to a secret of their majesties—take my advice: Don't impart it to any one, not even to the pillow on which you lay your head at night."

"But if your knowing would be of service to the queen? You ought to be her guide."

"We can only lead those who desire to be led."

"All I ask of you is to have an eye on certain signs. Did the queen say nothing when she was before the church a little while ago and heard the mass? Wasn't she startled by a certain tone? Didn't you observe a certain inclination—"

By a motion of his hand, the doctor signified that Irma had better stop, and added:

"My child, if you desire to live comfortably at court, you had better not try to solve riddles which those to whom they belong don't care to solve for you. But, above all, let no one know—"

"Discretion, discretion; the same old text," said Irma, roguishly, her beautifully curved lips quivering with emotion.

"You are of a creative temperament, and are therefore out of place at court," said the doctor. "You desire to assert your individuality, instead of giving way to prescribed forms; but it can't be done. Just observe Councilor Schnabelsdorf, who will be used up much

sooner than he imagines. He is constantly offering or preparing something new—cooking, roasting, or stewing all sorts of interesting information for his masters—and his memory is an everlasting 'table, table, cover thyself.' Take my word for it, before a year goes round, they'll all be tired of him. He who wishes to remain a favorite must not thrust himself forward."

Irma assented to this opinion, but saw through his attempt to change the direction of the conversation, and at once returned to what she had intended to say.

"Pray tell me," said she roguishly, "when one takes a false step, and, at the same time, injures himself, is it not called a misstep?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, let me tell you that the queen is in danger of making a misstep, which may be fraught with irreparable injury to her—"

"I'd prefer—" interrupted the doctor.

"Ah! you'd prefer. Whenever you say that, you've something to find fault with."

"You've guessed it. I'd prefer your leaving the queen to divulge her secrets at her own pleasure. I thought you were a friend of hers—"

"And so I am."

"Well, and since I am your morning preacher to-day, let me give you another warning. You are in danger of becoming one of those ladies who have no friends of their own sex."

"Is that really so dreadful?"

"Most assuredly. You must have a female friend, or there is some fault in your disposition. Isolation, such as yours, warps one's character, and, consciously or otherwise, results in vanity. If, from among all the ladies here, you can't make even one your friend, the fault must lie in yourself."

"But there's no harm in my having a male friend, a friend like yourself."

"I couldn't wish you a truer one."

Irma walked beside the doctor in silence.

When they again reached the lawn in front of the palace, Irma said:

"Do you know that this lawn is dressed up every Saturday with false hay?"

"Less wit and more clearness, if you please."

"Pshaw, how officinal!" said Irma, laughing. "Then allow me to tell you that the queen once said that she was very fond of the odor of new-mown hay; and, ever since then, the intendant of the gardens has had the lawn mowed at least once a week. But as stubborn nature won't furnish hay quickly enough, they bring some from one of the outlying meadows and spread it about during the night. And yet they persist in saying that, in our age, princes are not deceived."

"I can find nothing wrong or laughable in the matter. The intendant is one of those who regard themselves as the pleasure-purveying providence of their masters and—"

"'Pleasure-purveying providence!'—that's excellent. What a happy thought! I shall hold fast to that. How can you say you've no wit? Why, you're brimful of delicious sarcasm. Oh dear, 'pleasure-purveying providence'!" said Irma, laughing heartily; and while laughing, more lovely than ever.

The doctor found it no easy matter to lead the conversation back to the point at which it had been interrupted. Whenever he attempted a serious remark, she would look at him with a roguish expression and give way to laughter so hearty that he could not help joining in it. But when he at last said that he had heretofore given her credit for something more than mere occasional flashes of wit, and that he had, until now, supposed her capable of carrying on an argument, she quickly became the docile scholar, willing to be led by her master. And so skillfully did the doctor use his arguments that she soon reflected his thoughts as if they were her own.

A tall and handsome page, with an aquiline nose and raven hair, approached the countess.

"My lady," said he, "her majesty the queen awaits you in the music-room."

Irma excused herself to the doctor, whose eyes followed her with a thoughtful gaze. In a little while the rich and metallic notes of Countess Irma's voice were heard.

"Eberhard used to sing delightfully," said the doctor,

directing his steps toward the palace. When he approached the music-room, and saw that the canon, who had read the mass that morning, was about to enter, he hesitated.

The morning was soft and balmy; nature seemed wrapped in bliss. Every plant, every flower, thrives best in its native soil. Man alone is constantly creating new torments for himself. Could it be possible that the mischievous countess was right, after all? But why should the queen wish to forsake the faith of her ancestors?

The doctor retired to an arbor and read his Horace.

Doctor Sixtus presented himself before the dinner hour, and, while the company were seating themselves at table, rode off in the direction of the mountains.

That evening—it was mild and starlight—the court drove to the capital; for the corner-stone of the new arsenal was to be laid on the following day, with great pomp and military display.

CHAPTER III.

THE bells were ringing merrily. Their sounds were re-echoed by the rugged mountains, and then floated out over the lake, the smooth, green, glassy surface of which mirrored the forest-clad shores, the rocky crags, and the skies above.

Crowds were issuing from the church, the only building at the upper end of the lake. The men, donning their green hats with the black cock plumes, took their pipes from their pockets and struck a light; the women busied themselves with their dress, adjusted the pointed, green hats, smoothed their aprons, and tied the broad streaming ends of their silk kerchiefs anew. Following after the old women, who are always the last to leave the church, there was a handsome young couple. The wife was tall and stout, the husband slender and hardy as a pine. His appearance showed the effects of the week's hard work. His pointed, green hat, on which there was no hunter's badge, was worn aslant; he took off his jacket and laid it over his shoulder, and then, with a smile which seemed somewhat out of keeping with his weather-beaten face, said:

"Don't you see? This is much better. Now there's no danger of your getting squeezed in the crowd."

The young wife nodded assent.

A group of women and girls seemed to have been waiting for her. One of the older members of the party said:

"Walpurga, you shouldn't have done such a thing as walk all the way to church. You don't know how near you are to your time, and sometimes there's too much of a good thing."

"It won't do me any harm," replied the young wife.

"And I've prayed for you this morning," said a young, saucy maid, who wore a bunch of fresh flowers in her bosom. "When the priest prayed for the queen and

asked God to help her in the hour of trial, I asked myself: What's the use of my worrying about the queen? There are enough praying for her without me: and so I thought of you and said, Amen, Walpurga!"

"Stasi, I'm sure you meant well," said Walpurga deprecatingly, "but I want no share in it. You never ought to do such a thing. It's wrong to change a prayer in that way."

"She's right," said the old woman. "Why, that 'ud be just the same as taking a false oath."

"Let it go for nothing, then," said the girl.

"It must be fine to be a queen," said the old woman, folding her hands. "At this very hour, in all the churches, millions are praying for her. If such a king and queen aren't good after all that, they must be awful wicked."

The old woman, who was the midwife of the neighborhood, was always listened to with great attention. She accompanied husband and wife for a part of the way, and gave them precise information as to where she might be found at any hour during the next few days. Then, taking the mountain path which led to her dwelling, she left them, the rest of the church-goers dropping off in various directions as they reached the lanes and by-paths leading to their farms. The children always kept in front, their parents following after them.

A party of girls, who were walking along hand in hand, had much to say to one another. But at last they, too, separated and joined their parents.

The young couple were alone on the road. The glaring rays of the noonday sun were reflected from the lake.

It was almost a full hour's walk to their house, and they had scarcely gone a few hundred steps, when the wife said:

"Hansei, I oughtn't to have let Annamirl go."

"Ill run after her as fast as I can, I can catch up with her yet," said the husband.

"For God's sake, don't!" said his wife, holding him fast. "I'd be all alone here on the highway. Stay here! It'll soon be all right again."

"Wait a second! Hold fast to the tree! That's it."

The husband rushed into the meadow, gathered up an armful of hay, placed it on the pile of stones by the way-side, and seated his wife upon it.

"I feel better, already," said the wife.

"Don't talk now, rest yourself! Oh! dear me; if only a wagon were to come along; but there's neither man nor beast in sight. Just take a good rest, and then I'll carry you home. You're not too heavy for me. I've carried heavier loads many a time."

"Do you mean to carry me, in broad daylight?" said the wife, laughing so heartily that she was obliged to rest her hand on the stones, to support herself. "You dear, good fellow! Much obliged, but there's no need of it. I'm all right now, and can walk." She got up briskly, and Hansei's face was radiant with joy.

"Thank God! Here comes the doctor, in the very nick of time."

The doctor, who lived in the neighboring town, was just turning the corner. Hansei raised his hat and requested him to take his wife into the carriage. He gladly consented, but Walpurga seemed loth to get in.

"I never rode in a carriage in all my life," said she, repeatedly.

"Everything must be tried, you know," said the doctor, laughing, as he assisted her into the carriage. He told the husband that he might get up on the box, but he declined.

"I'll drive slowly," said the doctor.

Hansei walked along by the side of the carriage, constantly casting happy glances at his wife.

"Now we're two thousand paces from home; now we're a thousand," said he, talking to himself, while his glances showed his gratitude to the doctor, to the carriage that was kind enough to allow his wife to sit in it; and even to the horse from which he brushed the troublesome flies.

"Hansei is doing the horse a kindness," said the doctor to the young wife. She did not answer, and the doctor looked pleased with the husband, whom he had known for a long while as a wood-cutter in the royal forest. Hansei carried his hat in his hand and would now and then with his sleeve wipe the perspiration from his brow.

His face was sunburnt and void of expression, and, as he had not been a soldier, he wore no mustache. A shaggy beard, extending from his temples, encircled his long face; his forehead was, for the greater part, covered with thick, light hair; his short leather breeches displayed his great knees; the clocked, knitted leggins must surely have been a gift from his wife; the heavy hobnailed shoes had been used in many a mountain walk. Hansei walked along, beside the coach, with steady step, and at last exclaimed: "We're home!"

The little cottage by the lake stood in the midst of a small garden; an old woman was at the gate, and called out: "So you ride home in the bargain."

"Yes, mother," answered the wife, who, with profuse thanks, took leave of the doctor, while Hansei gratefully patted the horse that had safely brought her home.

"I'm going right off for Annamirl," said he; "keep some dinner for me."

"No, let's eat together; I'm hungry, too," exclaimed the wife, while she laid her hymn-book aside, and removed her hat and jacket. She was good-looking, had a full, round, cheerful face, and large plaits of light hair encircled her brow. She forced herself to remain at the table and join in the meal with her husband and mother, but as soon as the last morsel had passed his lips, Hansei started on his errand.

It was high time for Annamirl to come. Before the chickens had gone to roost, the Sunday child, a screaming, fair-haired girl baby, had come.

Hansei was quite beside himself with joy, and did not know what to do. He had not had a comfortable dinner, and it seemed a great while since he had eaten anything. It was ever so long ago, for he had become a father since then; and it seemed as if years, instead of hours, had passed in the mean while. He cut off a large slice from the loaf, but when he got out of doors, where the birds were chirping so merrily and the starlings were so tame, he cried out: "Here! You shall have some too; I want you to know that I'm a father, and of a Sunday child at that!" He threw the soft bread-crumbs to them, and the crust into the sea, saying: "Here, ye fish

who feed us; to-day I'll feed you!" He was overflowing with goodwill to the whole world, but there was no one left on whom he could exercise it. He knew not where he should betake himself to. Suddenly he spied the ladder leaning against the cherry-tree; he mounted it, plucked the cherries, and kept on eating until he quite forgot himself, and felt as if it were not he who was eating, but as if he were giving them to some one else. He no longer knew where or who he was, and at last began to fear that he was bewitched and would never be able to get down again. The telegraph wire ran by the house and almost touched the cherry-tree. Hansei looked at it as if to say: "Go, tell the whole world that I'm a father." He was delighted to see swallows and starlings sitting on the wire, and nodded to them, saying: "Don't disturb yourselves, I'll not harm ye." And so he went on plucking cherries, and looking straight before him for ever so long.

Then the grandmother put her head out of the window and called to him: "Hansei, your wife wants you."

He hurried down from the tree, and when he entered the room his wife laughed at him heartily, for his lips were black and his face was streaked with the juice of cherries.

"So you've been pilfering. Do leave a few cherries for me!"

"I'll bring the ladder into your room, so that I shant be able to go up into the tree again," said he, and there was merry laughter in the little cottage by the lake until the moon and stars looked down on it. The lamp in the little chamber was kept burning all night. The mother soon fell into a peaceful and happy slumber, and the Sunday child would whimper at times, but was easily quieted.

The grandmother was the only one awake—she had merely feigned sleep—and now sat on a footstool by the cradle of the new-born babe.

A bright star was shining overhead. It flickered and sparkled, and, within the cottage, the face of the mother was resplendent with joy as indescribable as the radiance of the star above. A child of man had become mother of a child of man, and she who watched over them was

the one from whom both these lives had sprung. The soft air seemed laden with song and the sounds of heavenly music, and the room itself, as if thronged with fluttering, smiling cherubs.

The old grandmother sat there, resting her chin on her hand and gazing at the star above, whose rays fell upon her face. She sat there with bated breath, feeling as if transported into another world. The glory of the Highest had descended upon the cottage, and, like a halo, now encircled the head of the grandmother, Walpurga, and the infant.

“Mother! How brightly the stars are shining!” said Walpurga, awaking.

“Never fear, they’ll keep on shining, even if you shut your eyes. Do go to sleep again!” answered the grandmother.

And, until the day broke, all lay hushed in slumber.

CHAPTER IV.

SEATED in an open carriage, Doctor Sixtus journeyed toward the Highlands.

The doctor was a man of easy and winning address. While the present king was yet the crown prince, he had accompanied him on his travels and, in the society of nobles, had improved on the light and graceful manner which he had acquired during a three years' stay in Paris. Just as princes treat their inferiors and regard their service as a right, so, in turn, do courtiers abuse those who are under them. The court doctor had chosen for his lackey, one of the readiest, and most skillful at command.

"Give me a light, Baum!" said he; and the lackey, who was sitting beside the driver on the box, handed him a lighted match. With gentle condescension, Sixtus offered his cigar-case to the lackey, who gratefully helped himself to a cigar. He well knew that it would prove too strong for him, and that, if he attempted to smoke it, it would in all likelihood throw him into a cold sweat; but he knew also that it is a safe rule never to refuse a proffered favor.

The road was good and the ride a pleasant one. At the next station, the royal horses were sent back to the king's stables and a relay of fleet post-horses was taken. Doctor Sixtus had no need to trouble himself about such matters—Baum knew what was needed and attended to it.

"Baum, where were you born?" asked the court doctor.

Although Baum was startled by the question, he acted as if he had not heard it. He found it necessary to collect himself before he could reply. His features were agitated for a moment, but he quickly assumed a modest and innocent expression.

The doctor repeated his question: "Baum, where were you born?"

With a face expressive of willingness to serve him in any way, Baum turned toward the doctor and said:

"I come from the Highlands; far over there near the border; but I've never felt at home there."

Sixtus, whose question had been a casual one, had no desire to inquire further into Baum's history.

He was quite affable toward Baum, who was the favorite lackey at court, since he possessed the art of showing by his demeanor how highly he esteemed the exalted personages whom he served.

"Keep as near the telegraph as possible," had been the instructions given to Doctor Sixtus. "Report every morning and evening where a dispatch will reach you, so that you may be recalled at any moment."

Doctor Sixtus looked out at the telegraph wires, running through the valleys and climbing over the hills, and smiled to himself. "I, too, am nothing more than an electric spark, with this difference however: the master who has sent me does not know where I am going to. No, I am like the spirit in the fairy-tale; I bring money and luxury to an invisible cottage, for I cannot find a rich peasant woman. Where art thou, O noble foster-mother?"

He looked out at the landscape with a self-complacent smile, while, in his day-dreams, various images appeared and vanished like the smoke clouds of his cigar.

It was after dark when they drew near to a little watering-place in the Highlands.

While they ascended the mountain, the lackey walked on beside the postilion. Sixtus had entrusted him with the secret reason for their journey. They had already, in distant lands, shared in adventures of quite a different nature. Baum engaged the postilion in conversation about the life and ways of the neighborhood and adroitly managed to inquire about young lying-in women. He had found the right party. The postilion was the son of a midwife, whose only fault was that she had died some time ago.

Sixtus was much gratified by the hint which he had just

received of how his mission might be fulfilled. He would seek information from the midwives of every village, and, in order to avoid being overrun, would take good care not to let them know for whom the foster-mother was wanted.

When Baum was about to return to his seat, Sixtus quietly called him and said: "During the whole of this journey, you're to address me simply as 'Herr Doctor.'"

The lackey did not ask why, for that was no part of his business; nor did he conjecture as to the reason; he was a lackey and obeyed orders. "He who does more than he's ordered to do is good for nothing," were the words that Baroness Steigeneck's chamberlain had often impressed upon him, and whatever the chamberlain said was as a sacred law to Baum.

The little watering-place was full of life. The company had just left the table. Some were talking of the day's excursion; others, about that projected for the morrow. A young officer in civil dress, and a stout gentleman, appeared to be the wags of the assembly. There were jokes and laughter, and, in the background, a party were singing to the accompaniment of a piano that was out of tune. All seemed more or less excited. They had repaired to the Highlands to escape from *ennui*, and, having arrived there, found themselves bored in earnest; for there are but few to whom the beauties of nature afford constant and all-sufficient entertainment.

Luckily for Sixtus, no one recognized him, and Baum, who was without his livery, allowed no information to escape him. The doctor looked upon the doings of the gentry about him with a certain aristocratic sense of superiority. As the neighborhood abounded with goitres, he concluded to leave without making further inquiries. On the following morning, they reached a small mountain village. Doctor Sixtus addressed himself to the village doctor, rode about the country with him for several days and, at last, left without having accomplished his mission. He, however, made a note of the names of several of the parties they had seen.

His knightly pride had well-nigh left him. He had looked into the dwellings of want and had beheld so much that told of toil and misery, that the careless indifference

with which beings of the same flesh and blood could live in palaces, seemed like a dream. In this outer world, existence is mere toil and care, nothing more than a painful effort to sustain life, with no other outlook than that of renewed toil and care on the morrow.

"A truce to sentiment," said the doctor to himself. "Things happen thus in this fine world. Men and beasts are alike. The stag in the forest doesn't ask what becomes of the bird, and the bird, unless it be a stork, doesn't care what becomes of the frogs! Away with sentimentality and dreams of universal happiness!"

The doctor traveled to and fro among the Highlands, always careful to keep near the telegraph stations, and, as instructed, reporting twice a day. He despaired of accomplishing his mission, and wrote to his chief that, although he could not find married women, there were lots of excellent unmarried ones. He therefore suggested that, as it would not do to deceive a queen, it would be well to have the most acceptable one married to her lover at once.

While awaiting a reply, he remained at a village near the lake, the resident physician of which had been a fellow-student of his.

The scarred face of the portly village doctor was refulgent with traces of the student cheer which in former days they had enjoyed in common. He was still provided with a never-failing thirst and ready for all sorts of fun. His manners had become rustic, and it was with a self-complacent feeling Sixtus thought of the difference in their positions.

Doctor Kumpan—this was a nickname he had received while at the university—looked upon his friend's excursion in search of a nurse as if it were one of their old student escapades. He rode with him over hill and dale, never loth to make a slight detour, if, by that means, they might gain an inn, where he could gratify his hunger with a good meal, and his thirst with a drop of good wine—the more drops the better.

"So many of our customs," said Sixtus, one day, "are, at bottom, immoral. For instance, nurse-hunting."

Doctor Kumpan roared with laughter and said:

"And you too, Schniepel,"—the college nickname of Sixtus—"so you, also, are one of the new-fashioned friends of the people. You gentlemen, whose gloves are ever buttoned, treat the people far too gingerly. We, who live among them, know them far better. They're a pack of rogues and blockheads, just like their superiors; the only difference is that they're more honest about it. The only effect your care for them can have will be to make matters worse. How lucky it is that the trees in the forest grow without artificial irrigation!"

During these excursions, Doctor Kumpan gave free vent to his rough humor, and was so delighted with his wit that he could live three days on the recollection of one of his own wretched jokes.

Sixtus found himself ill at ease in the company of the village doctor, with whom it was necessary to keep on the same friendly footing as of yore; and, therefore, made an effort to hasten his departure.

He was about to take his leave—it was on the morning of the second Sunday following—when Doctor Kumpan said:

"I'm disgusted with myself for having been so stupid. I've got it! Mother nature herself, unconditioned and absolute—just as old Professor Genitivius, the son of his celebrated father, used to say, while he brought his fist down on his desk—Come along with me!"

They drove off in the direction of the lake.

CHAPTER V.

SUNDAY morning had come again, and, with it, stirring times in the cottage by the lake. Godfather and godmother were there, and, at the first tolling of the church bell, whose sounds floated on the air like so many invisible yet audible waves, a procession moved from the house. The grandmother carried the child upon a soft, downy pillow, over which a white cover had been spread; following after her, proudly walked the father, with a nosegay in his button-hole. Beside him, was the godfather, mine host of the Chamois, followed by tailor Schneck's wife and other females. A light-haired boy about five years old, and bearing a two-pronged twig of hazel in his hand, had also joined in the procession.

"What are you after, Waldl?" asked Hansei.

The boy did not answer. Mistress Schneck took his hand in hers and said: "Come along, Waldl!" and then turning to Hansei, she continued: "Don't drive the child away! It's a good sign when a young boy goes along to the christening; the child will get a husband so much the sooner, and who knows but—" Hansei laughed to find that they were already thinking of a mate for his daughter.

While moving along in silent procession, they beheld another good omen. A swallow flew directly over the heads of the grandmother and the child, whereupon the former opened her great red umbrella and held it over herself and the babe.

Walpurga, unable to accompany them on their long walk to church, was obliged to remain at home. Her friend Stasi, who, on the previous Sunday, had altered the prayer for the queen in Walpurga's favor, remained to bear her company. Walpurga, seated in grandmother's arm-chair, looked out of the latticed window, at the violets, the buttercups, and the rosemary, the peaceful

lake and the blue skies, while she listened to the sound of the church bell.

"This is the first time my babe goes out into the wide, wide world, and I'm not with it," said she; "and some day I shall go into the other world and never be with it again. And still I feel as if it was with me all the same."

"I don't know what makes you so downhearted to-day," said her companion; "if that comes o' getting married, I'll never have a husband."

"Nonsense!" curtly replied Walpurga; her meaning was plain enough. Soon afterward, she added in a voice tremulous with emotion: "I'm not downhearted. It's only this. I just feel as if the baby and I had been both born over again. I don't know how it is, but I feel as if I were another person. Just think of it! In all my life, I've never lain abed so quietly and peacefully as I've been doing these many days. And to be lying there perfectly well, and with nothing to do but think and sleep, and awake again, and nurse the baby, while kind folks are forever bringing whatever heart can wish for—I tell you, if I'd been a hermit in the woods for seven years, I couldn't have done more thinking. It would keep me busy day and night to tell you all. But what's that?" said she, suddenly interrupting herself; "just then it seemed as if the whole house were shaking."

"I didn't notice anything. But your face is enough to give one the blues. Let's sing something. Just try whether you're still our best singer."

Her companion insisting, Walpurga at last began to sing, but soon stopped. Stasi essayed another song, but Walpurga did not care for it; indeed, none of them were to her liking that day.

"Let's be quiet," said she at last. "Don't worry me through all those songs; I don't feel like doing anything to-day."

The bells were tolling for the third time. The two friends were sitting together in silence.

At last Stasi said: "How kind it is of the innkeeper to let them ride home from church in his wagon."

"Listen! I hear wheels. They can't be coming already."

"No, that's the rattle of the doctor's carriage. There he is, up there by the willows; and there's another gentleman with him."

"Don't talk to me now, Stasi," said the young mother; "let the whole world drive by; it's all the same to me."

She sat there silently, resting her head against the back of the chair and looking out into the golden sunlight that seemed to infuse all nature with new life. The grass was of a lovelier green than ever before; the lake glittered with the soft sheen of the ever-changing light; the waves were splashing against the shore; a gentle breeze wafted the odors of the violets and rosemary from the window-shelf into the room.

A carriage stopped before the cottage. First, the loud cracking of a whip was heard; then, approaching footsteps, and at last, the jolly doctor calling out: "Hansei! Is there no one at home?"

"No," answered Stasi, "there's nobody but Walpurga and me," whereupon there was great laughter out of doors.

Doctor Kumpan entered the room, followed by the stranger, who started as if amazed. Moved with admiration by the sight he beheld, he bowed involuntarily; but, checking himself, he was more erect than before.

"Where's Hansei, the Sunday child's father?" inquired Doctor Kumpan.

The wife arose and said that he had gone to church with the child and its sponsors, but that he would soon return.

"Keep your seat!" said the doctor. "I mean to be an unbidden guest at your christening dinner, and my friend here, who is also a man-killer like myself, will join us."

"What do you want of my husband? Mayn't I know?"

"The husband cuts the loaf and then helps his wife to some of it. You know that's the custom of the country, Walpurga. We want to talk to your husband about a matter of great importance. Don't get frightened, it isn't a law affair. All I have to say to you is, you've a Sunday child. Perhaps you're one yourself?"

"I am, indeed."

"So much the better; you're doubly fortunate."

"It seems to me," said Doctor Sixtus, "we might as well speak to the wife at once. She appears to be a sensible woman and will be glad to make her husband and child happy."

Walpurga looked about her as if imploring help.

"Well then," said Doctor Kumpan, taking a seat, "you may as well let me tell it. Now, pay attention, Walpurga. Just keep your seat and let me tell you a story: Once upon a time, there was a king and a queen. The king was good and brave, and the queen was lovely, and a son was born to them who inherited the father's virtues and the mother's beauty; it might have been a daughter, but they would rather have it a son. Now when the son was born, they summoned a spirit who lived in the palace, and was called Doctor Puck; and they said to him: Puck, dear Puck, pack up your things, and pack yourself off to the mountains as fast as you can; for there, by the border of the lake, is a pretty little cottage in which there sits a mother who's tidy, strong, and good, and who's to be the foster-mother of the little prince, who is as good as his father, and as lovely as his mother. And the foster-mother shall have whatever her heart wishes for, and shall make her husband and child happy; and the king and the queen and the prince, and—but look up, Walpurga! look at this gentleman. He's the kind spirit named Doctor Puck, and he comes from the king and the queen. Do you understand me, Walpurga?"

The young mother rested her head upon the back of the chair and closed her eyes. She drew a long breath and uttered not a word. At that moment Hansei returned with the sponsor and the babe. The mother hurried to her child and taking it in her arms, rushed out into the garden with it, Stasi running after her.

"What's the matter?" asked Hansei, casting angry glances at the doctor and the stranger.

"Sit down, my worthy Hansei, and I'll tell you all about it. And it's well that you're here, too, my good friend of the Chamois: remain with us. The rest of you may all leave the room."

Suiting the action to the words, Doctor Kumpan hur-

ried out the villagers, who had been drawn there by curiosity. Then, accepting a pinch of snuff from the innkeeper, he said: "Hansei, make a bow; you must know that this gentleman is the court physician. He's sent here by the king, who wants you to lend him your wife for a year."

The doctor's overbearing manner so enraged Hansei, that he almost felt like putting him and the court doctor out of the room, and was already squaring his shoulders for the attack.

Motioning Kumpan to be silent, Sixtus told Hansei that, by the king's orders, he had sought information in regard to him, and that it had seemed as if the people did not know whom to praise the most—Hansei or Walpurga. Hansei grinned self-complacently, and now Sixtus acquainted him with the king's pleasure.

"Many thanks for the kind words," replied Hansei; "I'm much obliged to the king for his good opinion of me. I know him well; I rowed him across the lake twice while he was yet a merry lad, and a wide-awake huntsman. Tell the king that I hadn't thought he'd still remember me, but I can't part with my wife. I couldn't be so cruel to her, to myself, and, above all, to our child."

It was the longest speech he had ever made. He wiped the perspiration from his brow, and turned toward the table. He was as hungry as a wolf, and, seeing the nicely cut cake, took a piece, exclaiming: "Before I do it, may this morsel—"

"Don't swear!" cried the innkeeper, taking the cake from him. Don't swear; you can do as you please; no one can compel you."

"And no one wishes to," said Doctor Sixtus; "may I have a piece of cake?"

"To be sure you may! Help yourself,—and you too, doctor! We've wine also. Ah, doctor, this day two weeks ago, out on the road, things looked very serious!"

There was eating and drinking, and with every morsel that Hansei swallowed, his face grew more cheerful.

"It seems to me, Mr. Landlord, that you could explain the matter to him better than we," said Sixtus. The innkeeper offered Hansei a pinch of snuff, with the words:

"It would be a great honor to the village and to the whole neighborhood. Just think of it, Hansei! the king and the crown prince—"

"Perhaps it's a princess," interrupted Sextus.

"Oh!" said Hansei laughing, "and so the child isn't born yet?" But while laughing, he thought to himself: "There's still time to think the matter over." Then he laughed again at the thought, for, with all his simplicity, he was rogue enough to determine to reap the greatest possible advantage from it; he couldn't think of such a thing for less than a thousand—no, two thousand—and, who knows, perhaps even three thousand florins. Hansei would probably have gone up to a hundred thousand if the innkeeper had not resumed the conversation, and thus interrupted the current of his thoughts.

"Hansei is perfectly right; he says neither 'yes,' nor 'no'; he says nothing; for here the wife must decide. He's a good husband, and won't force her to do anything against her will. Yes, gentlemen, although we're only simple country folk, we know what's right."

"It does you credit to respect your wife so," said Doctor Sixtus. The innkeeper took another pinch of snuff and went on to say: "Of course; but after all, if I may be allowed to speak my mind freely, a woman's only half a man in reason and judgment. With your permission, Herr Court Doctor, I think we'd better say no more for the present, but call the wife. She's ever so good."

Happiness and misery, pride and humility, were depicted in Hansei's features.

"Whatever she says, I'll abide by," said he.

He was proud of possessing such a wife, and yet dreaded her decision. He pulled at the buttons of his coat as if to make sure they were all there. At last, urged by the innkeeper, he went out into the garden and called Walpurga, who was still sitting under the cherry tree.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER Walpurga had hurried out into the garden and had pressed the babe to her bosom, she quietly gave it to Stasi, saying:

"Take the child; I daren't feed it now. Oh, you poor, dear thing! They want to take me away from you. What harm have you ever done that they should treat you so? And what have I done? But they can't make me go! And who'd dare try? But what have they come for? Why to me? Come, darling, I'm all right again. I'm with you, and we'll not part from each other. I'm quite calm again."

When Hansei came to call Walpurga, he found her quietly pressing the child to her bosom and kissing its little hands.

"If you've had your talk out, do come in."

Walpurga motioned him to be quiet, lest he should disturb the child. He stood there silently for a while; not a sound escaped father, mother, or child; naught was heard but the starlings in the cherry-tree, who were feeding their young. Swift as the wind itself they would fly from their nests and return again. At last, the child, its hunger thoroughly sated, but its lips still softly moving, dropped back on the pillow.

"Come into the house," said Hansei, in a voice far gentler than his rough looks would have led one to expect, "Come in, Walpurga. There's no need of being rude, and there's nothing wrong in what they ask of us. They can't force us, you know, and we can thank them, at any rate. You can talk to strangers much better than I can. It's your turn to speak now; and I'll be satisfied with whatever you say or do."

Walpurga handed the child to the grandmother, and accompanied Hansei into the house. She looked back several times, and almost stumbled at the very threshold.

As soon as she entered the room, Doctor Sixtus came up to her, and, addressing her in a gentle, insinuating manner, said:

"My good woman! I should think it a sin to induce you to do anything that your heart condemns. But I feel it my duty to urge you to reflect upon the matter calmly and dispassionately."

"Many thanks. But—I hope you won't think ill of me—I couldn't be so cruel to my child." Her eye fell on Hansei, and she quickly added, "Nor my husband either. I can't go away and leave them all alone."

"Why they won't be alone; your mother's here," said the innkeeper, interrupting her. Doctor Sixtus interposed:

"Don't interrupt her, if you please, sir. Let her speak for herself, and pour out her whole heart. Pray go on, my good woman."

"I've nothing more to say; I know nothing more. Yes, there's one thing more. I've never been in service, except to do an odd day's work, now and then. I was born in this cottage, and I've lived here up to this time, and 'twas here my husband came to see me. I've never thought of leaving it, and I can't think of doing so now. I've never slept in a strange bed. If I had to leave here and go to the city for so long a time, I'd die of homesickness; and what would become of my child and my husband? I'm sure the king don't want us all to die of grief."

"I'd like to say a word, too," said Doctor Kumpan, casting an expressive glance at Doctor Sixtus. "We've already thought of your child. You've often wished for a cow, and we'll get you one that has just calved."

"I've got the very thing you want," exclaimed the innkeeper, rushing to the window and calling to a boy outside: "Go tell my man to bring my heifer, right away. Be quick about it! Hurry yourself!—I really didn't care to part with her," said he, addressing Doctor Sixtus and turning his back on Hansei, who well knew that the innkeeper dealt in cattle and pigs, all the year around. Everything in his stable had its price, and here he was acting just as if the heifer were a member of his family.

"She's the very best beast I've got," added he, "but one ought to give up everything for his king; and she's a bargain at forty crown thalers." Then turning to Hansei he said, with a grin: "You're getting a fine, plump little cow—not an empty hide."

"Not so fast, my friend," said Doctor Sixtus; "but if Hansei likes the heifer, I'll buy it of you."

"The mother goes and the cow takes her place," muttered Walpurga, absently.

"I never thought you could be so foolish," thundered the innkeeper. "Why, what a fuss you're making! You ought to shout for joy, and get down on your knees and thank God!"

Doctor Sixtus quieted him, and the village doctor now said: "Joy and song come at no one's bidding; if Walpurga won't go with us cheerfully we'll look further; there must be others besides her."

He arose, and took his hat as if to depart, Doctor Sixtus doing likewise.

"How soon would I have to go, and how long would I have to be away from home?" asked the young wife.

Seating himself again, Doctor Sixtus replied: "I can't say how soon, but you'd have to be ready to go at a moment's notice."

"Then I wouldn't have to go right off—and how long would I have to stay?"

"A year, or thereabouts."

"No, no! I won't go. God forgive me for giving it a moment's thought!"

"Then we'll take our leave, and may God bless you and your child," said Doctor Sixtus, offering her his hand. With a voice full of emotion, he added:

"It would do the royal child more harm than good if you were to leave here regretfully, and carry a constant grief about with you. That the mere idea pains you is quite natural. You couldn't, as a good woman and true mother, have consented at once, and who knows whether I would have accepted you if you had? What the queen desires is a good woman, who has a respectable husband and a kind mother; she will have no other, and has no thought of grieving or offending you. Therefore, if you

can't be cheerful among strangers; if it doesn't gladden your heart to think that you may benefit the royal child, and that the king will be kind to you, you'll do far better to remain at home and not allow yourself to be tempted by the money. Don't let that induce you. No; you'd better not go."

He was about to leave, when the innkeeper detained him and said:

"I've only one word more to say. Listen, Walpurga, and you, too, Hansei. You've said: 'No, I won't go,' and the answer does you great credit. But ask yourselves what the consequence will be? To-day, to-morrow, perhaps even the day after to-morrow, you'll be quite content—will take each other by the hand, kiss your child, and say: 'Thank God! we've resisted temptation; we've remained united in poverty, and maintain ourselves honestly; we'd rather toil and suffer together than part.' But how will it be a day or a week later? How then? When sorrow and want and misfortune come—for we're only human after all—and you find yourselves helpless? Won't you say to yourselves: 'If we'd only consented.' Won't you then, by word or look, say to one another: 'Why didn't you urge me? Why didn't you decide to go?' I don't want to persuade you, I merely want to remind you of all you ought to consider in the matter."

Silence ensued. The husband looked at his wife and then at the ground; the wife looked at him for a while, and then suddenly raised her hand to her eyes.

The cracking of a whip was heard and then a fine black-pied cow bellowing loud and deep, as if the sound issued from a cavern. All were startled. The sound broke upon the silence like a ghost-call at noonday.

The innkeeper cursed and swore, and putting his head out of the window, abused the servant for not having brought the calf, which had, in truth, already been sold to the butcher.

The servant fastened the cow to the fence, and hurried home to bring its calf. The cow dragged at the rope, as if trying to strangle herself, and groaned and bellowed until she foamed at the mouth.

"That's only a beast, and see how she goes on!" cried Walpurga.

The arrival of the cow seemed to dissipate the effect of the innkeeper's eloquence. But Walpurga suddenly composed herself. Speaking quickly, as if addressing an unseen being, and without looking at any one, she said:

"A man or a woman can do more than a beast!" Then, turning toward her husband, she added: "Come here, Hansei, give me your hand. Tell me, from the bottom of your heart, will you be satisfied with whatever I may do or say?"

"Do you mean if you say 'no'?" replied Hansei, hesitating.

"Whether I say 'yes' or 'no' is what I mean."

Hansei could not utter a word. Had he been able to speak, his remarks would have been very sensible. He kept looking into his hat, as if there to read the thoughts that were running through his head. Then he took his blue pocket-handkerchief, and twisted it up as if he were trying to make a ball of it. When Walpurga found that Hansei did not answer, she said:

"I can't ask you to decide. I, alone, can do that. I'm the child's mother—I'm the wife, and . . . if I go, I must, and I'm sure I can, keep down all grief, so that I may do no harm to the other child; and—and—here's my hand, sir—my answer is 'yes'."

It seemed as if a load had been lifted from the hearts of all present. Hansei felt a stinging sensation in his eyes, and as if choking. To allay this, he indulged in a fresh glass of wine and a large slice of cake. What a strange day! If the company would only go, so that one could get a bite of something warm. The morning seemed as if it would never end. The two physicians had much to say to Walpurga, who promised to keep herself as cheerful as possible. She told them that when she had once undertaken a thing she would carry it out; that God would help to preserve her child and that she would do all she could for the king's child. "You can depend upon it, when I've made up my mind to do a thing, I do it," she repeated again and again. Now that she had decided, she seemed to have acquired wondrous self-control. Spying her

mother, who was carrying the child, she called her to her, and told her of everything. The child slumbered peacefully, and was placed in the cradle that stood in the bedroom. The grandmother seemed to look upon the whole affair as if it were an unalterable decree of fate. For years it had been her wont to allow Walpurga to decide in all things, and in this case, moreover, the king's pleasure was to be regarded.

"Your child won't be motherless; I understand her better than you do. We've got a cow, and we'll see that the child is well cared for."

The innkeeper hurried out and put the cow in the stable. That closed the purchase and gave him a pretty profit. He was provoked at himself to think that he had not asked ten thalers more. He managed to get two thalers additional, as a gratuity for the boy, but half of this sum found its way into his own pocket.

Hansei, who had in the mean while refreshed himself, thought it would be well to show that he was a man. He inquired as to the pay, and was just about to name the large sum he had been thinking of, when the innkeeper returned, and made it clear to him that the less he bargained the more he would get. He offered to give him five hundred florins for the christening gifts alone, and told him that, if he left it to the king, he would get all the more.

Walpurga now asked what she would have to take with her. Doctor Sixtus told her that her best suit would be all that was necessary.

Many of the villagers had gathered before the window. They had heard the news, and others, while on their way to afternoon church, stopped, and at last there was quite a crowd. There was much merriment, for every man said that he would gladly let the king borrow his wife for a year.

Stasi offered to help the grandmother. It was not without pride that she spoke of her being able to write a good hand and promised to send Walpurga a letter once a week, about the child, the husband, and the mother.

She then brought the plates, for it was high time they were at dinner. Walpurga said that she would put all to rights within the next few days.

"What I now deny my child," said she, "I can more than make up to her for the rest of her life."

While she was thus speaking, she heard the child crying in the other room and hurried to it.

The two physicians and the innkeeper were about to leave, when the sounds of a post-horn were heard in the direction of the road that led up from the lake.

The special post had arrived. The lackey whom Doctor Sixtus had left at the telegraph station near by, was sitting in the open carriage. He raised his hand, in which he held a letter aloft. He stopped before the cottage and called out to the crowd:

"Shout huzza! every one of you! A crown prince was born an hour ago!"

They cheered again and again.

An old woman, bent double, suddenly turned toward the lackey and gazed into his face with her bright, brown eyes that, in spite of her years, were still sparkling.

"Whose voice is that?" muttered the old woman to herself.

There was an almost imperceptible change in the features of the lackey, but the old woman had noticed it. "Clear the way, folks!" said he, "so that I may alight!"

"Get out of the way, Zenza!" (Vincenza) "Old Zenza's always in the way."

The old woman stood there, staring before her vacantly, as if in a waking dream. She was shoved aside, and lost the staff with which she had supported herself. The lackey tripped over it, but, without looking to the right or left, hurried into the cottage.

Doctor Sixtus advanced to meet him, took the dispatch, and returned to the room. Walpurga had come back in the mean while, and he said to her:

"It has happened sooner than we expected. I've just received a dispatch; at ten o'clock this morning, the crown prince was born. I am to hurry off to the capital and bring the nurse with me. Now, Walpurga, is the time to prove your strength. We leave in an hour."

"I'm ready," said Walpurga resolutely. She felt so weak, however, that she was obliged to sit down.

CHAPTER VII.

THE two physicians, accompanied by the innkeeper, left the house. Stasi brought in the soup and the roast meat for the christening dinner and placed them on the table. The grandmother offered up a prayer, in which the others joined; they all seated themselves at the table. Walpurga was the first to take a spoonful of the soup from the dish, but, finding that no one cared to eat, she filled her spoon again and said:

“Open your mouth, Hansei, and let me give you something to eat. Take this, and may God’s blessing go with it. And just as the food I now offer you gives me more pleasure than if I were eating it myself, so, when I’m among strangers, not a morsel will pass my lips that I wouldn’t rather give you and the child. I only go away so that we may be able to live in peace and comfort hereafter. I shall think of you and mother and the child, by day and night, and, God willing, I’ll return again in health and happiness. Don’t forget that God might have called me away in the hour of pain and trial, and that then you’d have been without me all your lifetime. Mother, I’ve often heard you say that a wife giving birth to a child has one foot in the grave. I’m only going away for a year, and you all know that I’ll return the same Walpurga that I now am. Don’t let our parting be sad, Hansei; you must help me! You can, and I know you will. You’re my only support. Keep yourself tidy while I’m gone. You’d better wear a good shirt every Sunday morning, for now you can afford it. You’ll find them in the blue closet—on the upper right-hand shelf. Do eat something; I’ll eat just as soon as you do. We need all our strength. You’ll be all right to-morrow, and so shall I. But do eat something! For every spoonful you take, I’ll take one, too:—there, that’s it—but not so fast, or I

can't keep up with you!" Smiling through her tears, she went on eating.

"And now, mother," she continued, "you'll have no chance to say that you're a burden to us. When I'm gone, you can take the two pillows off my bed and put them on yours, so that you can sleep with your head right high. That'll do you good. If we didn't have you, I wouldn't dare to think of going. Don't spoil my husband, and, when I come back again, we'll fix up a little room for you where you can live as well as the first farmer's wife in the land."

They let her do all the talking, and when she said: "Do say something, Hansei," he replied: "You'd better keep on talking. I can hear my voice any time; but it'll be a long while before I listen to yours again. Who knows but—"

He was about to take a piece of meat, but he put it back on the plate. He could not eat another morsel; nor could the others. The grandmother arose and said grace. Time flew by. A coach drove up to the door. The lackey was the only one seated in it; the gentlemen intended to follow shortly after. Baum speedily found himself on a familiar footing with Hansei. The first step toward their intimacy was the offer of a good cigar. He said that he envied Hansei's luck in having such a wife, and in being so fortunate into the bargain. Hansei felt greatly flattered. Doctor Sixtus gave orders that some bed cushions should be placed in the coach, so that Walpurga might be comfortable and well protected against the night air.

"Do you ride all night?" inquired Hansei.

"Oh, no! We shall reach the capital by midnight."

"But your fast driving may hurt my wife."

"Don't let that worry you. Your wife will be as well taken care of as the queen herself."

"I don't know how it is, but when I look at this gentleman and hear him talk," said Hansei, looking Baum straight in the face, "I feel ever so queer."

"How so? Do I look so terrible?"

"God forbid! No, indeed! But the one I'm thinking of was a good-for-nothing fellow. No offense, I assure

you. But old Zenza—there she is at the garden gate, watching us—had twins. One is named Thomas and the other was Wolfgang, or Jangerl, as they say hereabouts. Well, Jangerl joined the soldiers and went to America. It must have been some thirteen or fourteen years ago, and no one has ever heard of him since, and really—but you won't think ill of what I say?"

"Of course not! Go on."

"Well, Jangerl looked just like you to the very hair. No, not the hair, for his was red and his face wasn't as fine as yours, either; but taking it altogether, just as the devil takes the farmers"—Hansei was delighted with his joke, and the lackey joined in his laughter—"one might say that you look like each other. But you're sure you're not angry at what I've said?"

"Not at all," said Baum, looking at his watch. The clock in the church steeple was just striking five, and he said: "There's a difference of exactly one hour between your clock and that at the capital. Did this house belong to your parents?"

"No, I got it with my wife. That's to say, we still owe a mortgage of two hundred florins on it, but the farmer who holds it, doesn't press us."

"Your wife can buy you another house, and you ought to consider yourself lucky to have so good-looking a wife."

"Yes, and that's what makes me sorry to give her up," complained Hansei. "However, there are only three hundred and sixty-five days in a year—but that's a good many, after all."

"And as many nights in the bargain," said Baum, laughing. Poor Hansei shuddered.

"Yes, indeed!" said he. He felt that politeness required an answer on his part.

In the mean while, Walpurga had asked her mother and Stasi to leave her alone with the child. She was kneeling beside the cradle and wetted the pillow with her tears. She kissed the child, the coverlet, and cradle, and then, getting up, said: "Farewell! A thousand times, farewell!" She had dried her tears, and was about to leave the room, when the door opened from without and her mother entered.

"I'll help you," said she. "You'll be either twice as nappy, or twice as miserable, when you return, and will make us just as happy or as miserable as you are."

Then she took Walpurga's left hand in hers, and, in a commanding voice, said: "Put your right hand on your child's head!"

"What's that for, mother?"

"Do as I bid you. Swear by your child's head and by the hand I hold in mine, that you'll remain good and pure, no matter what temptations may assail you. Remember you're a wife, a mother, a daughter! Do you swear this with all your heart?"

"I do, mother, so help me God! But there's no need of such an oath."

"Very well," said the mother. "Now walk around the cradle three times with your face turned from it. I'll lead you; don't stumble. Now you've taken the child's homesickness from it, and I'll take good care of it. Take my word for that."

She then led Walpurga into the room and, handing her the great loaf of bread and the knife, said:

"Cut a piece for yourself, before you go. May God bless it for your sake, and when you've reached your journey's end, let the bread that you've brought from home be the first morsel you eat. That'll kill the feeling of strangeness; and now, farewell."

They remained there in silence, holding each other by the hand.

Walpurga found it wondrous strange that Hansei was walking about in the garden with the lackey and forgetting her. Just then, he went up the ladder to get him some cherries, and was smoking incessantly; after that, he took him into the stable, where the cow had been placed.

The two physicians had returned, and Hansei had to be called into the room, for it was here, and not out of doors in the presence of the crowd, that the wife wished to take leave of her husband. Doctor Sixtus put a roll of crown thalers in Hansei's pocket. After that, Hansei constantly kept his hand there and was loth to remove it.

"Give me your hand, Hansei," said Walpurga.

He loosened his grasp of the money and gave her his hand.

"Farewell, dear Hansei, and be a good man. I'll remain a good wife. . . . And now, God keep you all of you."

She kissed her mother and Stasi, and then, without once looking back, she hurried through the garden and seated herself in the carriage. The cow in the stable bellowed and groaned, but the sounds were drowned by the postilion's fanfare.

During all this, old Zenza had been leaning against the garden gate; at times passing her hand over her face and rubbing her bright and sparkling eyes. And now, when the lackey passed her she stared at him so, that he asked, in a rough and yet not unkind voice:

"Do you want anything, mother?"

"Yes; I'm old, and a mother in the bargain. Hi-hi-hi!" said she, laughing, and the crowd hinted to the lackey that her mind often wandered.

"Is there anything you want?" asked the lackey again.

"Of course there is, if you'll give it to me."

With trembling hand, the lackey drew the large purse from his pocket, and took out a piece of gold. But no, that might betray him. After fumbling with the money a long while, he at last gave the gold piece to the old woman, and said:

"This is from the king."

He mounted the box and never looked back again. The coach started off.

People came up to Zenza and asked her to show them what she had received, but her hand was closed as with a convulsive grasp. Without answering, she went away, supporting herself upon her staff.

She walked on, constantly looking at the ruts that the carriage wheels had made in the road, and those who passed her could hear her muttering unintelligibly. Her staff was in her right hand, and with her left she still clutched the gold piece.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE carriage moved along the road by the lake, and, at last, turning the corner at the stone-pile, was out of sight. The hay on which Walpurga had rested a fortnight before was still lying in the same place.

They passed a handsome girl, dressed in once genteel, but now shabby, finery. She was of a powerful frame, tawny complexion, and her blue-black hair was braided in thick plaits. She stared at Walpurga, but did not greet her until after she had passed.

"That's the daughter of the old woman you gave a present to," said Walpurga, addressing the lackey. "She goes by the name of Black Esther. If the mother doesn't bury the money out of sight, she'll surely take it from her."

Although Baum turned toward Walpurga, he was not looking at her, but at the girl, who was no other than his sister. A little while ago, he had denied his mother, while bestowing an alms upon her. And now he sat up beside the postilion, his arms folded as if to brace himself, for he felt as if his heart would break. His whole life passed before him, and, now and then, he planted himself more firmly in his seat, lest he should fall. And now the carriage passed by a farmyard where, twenty years ago, he had, by his mother's order, stolen a goose. He was a slim lad then and had found it easy to slip in, on all fours, through the gap in the hedge, which had closed up in the mean while.

Thomas, his twin brother, had joined the poachers. But Baum, who was not apt at their work, was glad when they took him for a soldier. One day while he was on duty at the palace an old *valet de chambre* brought a letter from Baroness Steigeneck, who was then at the height of her power. The valet was kept waiting a long while, during which he chatted with Baum, to whom he

took a great liking. He invited Baum to visit the Steigeneck palace, where they drank together in the servants' room and were exceedingly jolly.

"Why is your hair so red?" said the *valet de chambre*.

"Why? Because it grew so."

"But that can be remedied."

"Indeed! How so?"

The old man gave Baum the requisite directions.

"You must also change your name. Rauhensteiner is too hard for their lordships. It is difficult to pronounce, and particularly for those who have false teeth. You must take some such name as Beck, or Schultz, or Hecht, or Baum. For, mind you, a dog has no name except the one its master sees fit to call it by."

"'Baum' would suit me very well."

"Well then, let it be Baum." On his way home that night, he kept continually saying to himself, "Baum, Baum—that's a short and easy name and no one will know me." The old man had made him swear that he would have nothing more to do with his family. His recent visit to his native village had reminded him of his pledge, and, although he attached but little importance to an oath, he found it convenient and, as he thought, praiseworthy to keep this one.

Through the intercession of the Steigeneck valet, his military discharge was made out in the name of Wolfgang Rauhensteiner—surnamed Baum. After that, he was simply known as Baum, and none knew that he had ever borne another name. He was perfectly willing to forego his chance of any bequests that might be left to him under the name of Rauhensteiner.

He entered the service of the court, and his first position was as groom to the prince, while at the university and during his subsequent journey through Italy. As a precaution, he had gone home and obtained an emigrant's passport, and afterward had dyed his hair black. In his native village, all were under the impression that he had emigrated.

After he returned from his travels, he married the daughter of the *valet de chambre*, and ever grew in favor with his masters. He was discreet in all things, and

would cough behind his raised left hand. He was delighted with the name of "Baum." Such was his zeal to serve his masters, that had it been possible he would, for their sakes, have banished all harsh consonants from the language.

"That's settled," said Baum, as he sat on the box beside the postilion and coughed behind his hand. "That's settled"—and his face assumed a calm and determined expression as if he thought some one was watching him. "I've emigrated to America. If I were there, I'd be dead and buried as far as my family are concerned. Family, indeed! They'd only ruin and beggar me, and always be at my heels. None of that for me!" He watched the people, many of whom he knew, walking along the road. "What a pitiful life these folks must lead—no pleasure the whole year round! Once a week, on Sunday they get shaved and preached to, and the next morning the squalor begins anew. Any one who has escaped, would be a fool to think of returning to it again!"

Whilst Baum was thus recalling long-forgotten incidents of his past, Walpurga was trying hard to repress her tears. It seemed as if some higher power to whose sway she submitted herself had deprived her of thought and feeling.

With wondering eyes she gazed at the brooks that hurried down from the hills and then, as if to see what was becoming of Walpurga, would run along beside the road. When they dashed across the wooden bridges that overhung the roaring brook, she would tremble with fear, and would not feel reassured until they had gained the smooth road on the other side. She looked up at the mountains, the houses and the Alpine huts; she knew the names of those who dwelt in every one of them. But they soon reached a region to which she was a stranger.

At the next station where they stopped to change horses, the Sunday idlers were astonished to see a peasant woman descend from so elegant a carriage. A woman nursing her child was sitting under a linden tree near by. Prompted by curiosity, she raised herself in her seat, and the child turning its head at the same time, mother and

child were staring at Walpurga, who nodded to them kindly, while her eyes filled with tears and her throat seemed to close. The postilion blew his horn, the horses started off at a gallop, and Walpurga again felt as if flying through the air.

"This is fast traveling, Walpurga, isn't it?" exclaimed Baum. When she now looked at him, she, too, was startled by his wonderful resemblance to Thomas.

"Yes, indeed!" said she. The doctor said but little, for he was too deeply moved by sympathy for her. Nor did he, as usual, assert his pride of position. This woman was so much more than a mere tool that one might well treat her with kindness and consideration. She had found it so hard to leave her home. He was, for some time, considering what he should say to her, and, at last, inquired:

"Do you like your doctor?"

"Yes, indeed I do! He's very odd. He scolds and abuses everybody; but for all that, he does good wherever he can, be it day or night; rich and poor are all the same to him. Oh, he's a real good man!"

Doctor Sixtus smiled and asked her:

"I didn't get to see his wife. Do you know her?"

"Of course I do. It's Hedwig, the apothecary's daughter. Her family are very nice folks, and she's a sweet, charming creature; plain in her ways and quite a home body. They have fine children, too—five or six of them, I believe—and so she has her hands full. He might have taken you to his house, for it's ever so neat and tidy."

He was delighted with Walpurga's good report of his friend. And now that he had succeeded in changing the train of her thoughts, he concluded that he had done enough and could leave her to shift for herself.

She saw everything as if in a dream. There were fields and meadows, then a village, a window-shelf covered with carnations and hanging vines. You've such at home, too, thought she, and in a moment they had vanished from sight. Then they passed the churchyard, its black crosses half buried in the earth and yet standing out boldly against the clear sky. In the village there was music and dancing, and merry youths and maidens, their faces

flushed by their sport, hurried to the windows. Then they passed more fields and meadows and houses, and saw groups sitting together and talking. And then the postilion blew a loud blast. A child was running in the middle of the road. With a shriek of horror, the mother rescued it and hastened away. The carriage did not stop. Walpurga looked back, feeling sure that they must now be thanking God for the child's escape. And still they went on. Then they passed a cow grazing by the wayside, a boy near by watching her. In the level country where the climate is so much milder, the cherry-trees were already bare of fruit. And then they came to great fields, with their vast sea of waving grain—there were none such in the Highlands. . . . How happy these people must be who live down here, where there is something more than water, meadow and forest. In yonder fallow field, there lies a plow as if sleeping over Sunday. It grows dark, lights begin to twinkle; there are men and women, too. They are in their homes, but I'm being taken away from mine. . . . At the next post station, both the doctor and Walpurga remained in the carriage. The horses were quickly changed, the old ones going, with heavy steps, into the stable; a new postilion mounted the box, and they were off again. Walpurga saw nothing more; her eyes were closed, and it seemed as if it were a dream, when the carriage stopped again for a fresh relay of horses, and she heard Baum ordering the postilion not to blow his horn lest he might awaken those inside.

"I'm not asleep," said the doctor.

"Nor am I! Just blow your horn, postilion," said Walpurga.

The postilion blew a loud blast, and they were off again. The stars were glittering overhead. They passed through more villages; windows were quickly raised, but they dashed by so rapidly that they were out of sight before the surprised villagers had time to collect their senses. Objects at the wayside were strangely illumined by the ever-moving glimmer of the two carriage-lamps, and at last, in the distance, they descried a great light and, over it, a cloud of smoke.

"There's an illumination in the city!" exclaimed Baum. The horses were urged to greater speed, and the postilion blew his horn more merrily than before. They were, at last, in the capital.

The carriage made slow headway through the surging, joyous crowd that filled the streets.

"Here comes the crown prince's nurse," was soon noised about, and the merry crowd greeted Walpurga with loud cheers. Confused and abashed, she hid her face in her hands. At last they were safely in the courtyard of the palace.

CHAPTER IX.

WALPURGA found herself in the interior quadrangle of the palace. She was quite giddy, with looking at the many doors, the great windows, the broad staircases and the coats of arms, emblazoned with figures of wild men and beasts. All seemed wondrous strange under the glare of the gas lamps, the strong lights, here and there, contrasting with the deep, mysterious shadows. Walpurga stared about her with a dreamy vacant gaze. Giving way to memories of olden legends, she thought of the young mother whom the genii of the mountain had carried off to a subterranean cavern, where they detained her by means of a magic charm, while she nursed a new-born babe.

But she was recalled to herself at last. From the palace-guard, where the muskets were stacked in two long rows and the sentry was marching to and fro, she heard one of the songs of her home.

"The captain of the palace-guard has sent wine to the soldiers," said a young liveried servant addressing Baum, whom he assisted to unharness the horses: "the whole town will be drunk."

Walpurga felt like telling them that they should not permit the soldiers to sing so loudly, because the young mother who was lying overhead ought to sleep. She had no idea of the great size of the palace, but was soon to find it out.

"Come with me," said Doctor Sixtus; "I'll conduct you to the first lady of the bed-chamber. Have no fear! You will be cordially welcomed by all."

"I'd better bring my pillows with me," answered Walpurga.

"Never mind; Baum will attend to them."

Walpurga followed after the doctor. They ascended a staircase, brilliantly illuminated and decorated with flow-

ers, and Walpurga felt ashamed at the thought of her coming empty-handed, just as if there was nothing she could call her own. "I'm not that poor, after all," said she almost audibly.

They reached the grand corridor. It was also brilliantly illuminated and filled with flowers. There were people in uniform, walking to and fro, but the soft carpets prevented their footsteps from being heard. The under-servants remained standing while Sixtus and Walpurga passed by them. At last they stopped before a door. Addressing the servant who was stationed there, Doctor Sixtus said:

"Inform her excellency that Doctor Sixtus is in waiting, and that he has brought the nurse."

This was the first time that Walpurga had heard herself spoken of as "the nurse," and as being "brought."

She again felt as if under a spell, or rather, as if sold. But she plucked up courage, and suddenly it seemed to her as if she were seated, as she often had been, in a boat on the lake; as if she were plying the oars with her strong arms—a furious wind resisting her progress, and the waves rushing wildly on high. But she was strong, and rowed with a steady hand, and at last conquered the wind and the waves. She stiffened her arms and clenched her fists as if to grasp the oars more firmly.

The servant soon returned, and held the door open while Doctor Sixtus and Walpurga entered a large, well-lighted apartment. A tall, thin lady, clad in a dress of black satin, was seated in an armchair near the table. She arose for a moment, but resumed her seat immediately. It is no trifling matter to be first lady of the bed-chamber at the birth of a crown prince. This had been a great day with Countess Brinkenstein. Her name had been inscribed for all time in the great official record of the day.

Although she always judged her actions by a severe standard, she had reason to be satisfied with herself that day. While the court and capital were all commotion, she had been perfectly calm. She had kept up the dignity of the court and, moreover, of the king, who had shown himself strangely weak and excited.

She was resting on her laurels. One circumstance had greatly vexed her and had not yet been dismissed from her mind; but as she had a firm will, she controlled her feelings. She was always self-possessed, because she always knew just what was to be done.

To have waited so long before securing a nurse was a thing unheard of. Many had offered themselves, and, among them, some who belonged to good families; that is, of the nobility who had married lower officials. Countess Brinkenstein regarded the queen's resolve that the nurse must be of the common people—a peasant woman, indeed—as overstrained fastidiousness; there could be no harm in referring to princely errors in such terms. The preserver of decorum was therefore determined to assume the responsibility of filling the post with a nurse of her own choice, when the doctor's telegram, informing them that he had secured the ideal peasant woman, was received. Her displeasure at the queen's behavior was now transferred to the peasant woman, who was as yet a stranger to her, and who would, in all likelihood, bring trouble into the palace. But, after all, what were rules and regulations made for? By consistently observing them, all would yet be well.

When the peasant woman was announced, Countess Brinkenstein arose, her stern features softened by the noble thought that this poor woman ought not to suffer because of the queen's newly acquired love for the people; a love which would only render its objects the more unhappy and discontented.

The doctor presented Walpurga, and spoke of her in such terms that she cast down her eyes, abashed at his praise.

Addressing Countess Brinkenstein in French, he told her how difficult it had been to secure this, the fairest and best woman in the Highlands. Answering in the same tongue, the countess congratulated him upon his success and commented on Walpurga's healthy appearance. Finally she inquired, still in French:

"Has she good teeth?"

The doctor turned to Walpurga, saying:

"Her ladyship thinks you can't laugh."

Walpurga smiled, and the countess praised her perfect teeth. She then touched the bell on the table and a lackey appeared.

"Tell privy councilor Gunther," said she, "that I await him here, and that the nurse of his royal highness has arrived."

The lackey left the room. The countess now touched the bell twice; a tall lady, advanced in years, and wearing long, corkscrew curls, appeared, and bowed so low that Walpurga imagined she intended to sit down on the floor.

"Come nearer, dear Kramer," said the countess. "This is the nurse of his royal highness; she is in your especial charge. Take her to your room and let her have something to eat. What shall it be, doctor?"

"Good beef broth will do very well."

"Go with Kramer," said the countess, addressing Walpurga, and smiling graciously. "Whenever you want any thing, dear child, ask her for it. God be with you!"

The lady with the corkscrew curls, offering her hand to Walpurga, said: "Come with me, my good woman."

Walpurga nodded a grateful assent.

And so, after all, there was some one to take her by the hand and speak German to her. And they were kind words, too, for the old lady had addressed her as "dear child," and mademoiselle as "my good woman." While they were speaking French, it had seemed as if she were betrayed, for she could not help feeling that they were talking of her. Mademoiselle Kramer now conducted her to the second room beyond.

"And now let me bid you welcome!" said the lady, while her homely face suddenly acquired a charming expression. "Give me both hands. Let us be good friends, for we'll always be together, by day and by night! They call me the chief-stewardess."

"And I'm called Walpurga."

"A pretty name, too! I think you'll keep it."

"Keep my name! Why, who can take it from me? I was christened Walpurga, and I've been called so ever since childhood."

"Don't agitate yourself, dear Walpurga," said the

stewardess, with much feeling. "Yes, pray be calm," added she, "and whenever anything displeases you, tell me of it, and I'll see that it is remedied. You ought to be contented and happy always; and now, sit in this armchair, or if you'd rather lie on the sofa and rest yourself, do so. Make yourself perfectly at home."

"This will do very well," said Walpurga, ensconcing herself in the great armchair and resting her hands upon her knees. Mademoiselle Kramer now ordered one of the serving-maids to bring in some good beef broth and wheaten bread for the nurse. Turning toward Walpurga, she saw that she was crying bitterly.

"For God's sake, what's the matter? You're not frightened or worried about anything? What are you crying for?"

"Let me cry. It does me good. My heart's been heavy for ever so long. I suppose you'll let me cry when I can't help it. I didn't know what I was doing when I said 'yes.' God's my witness, I never thought it would be like this!"

"What has happened? Who has done anything to you? For God's sake, don't cry; it will do you harm, and I'll be reprimanded for having allowed it. Just tell me what you want; I'll do all I can for you."

"All I want of you is to let me cry. Oh, my child! Oh, Hansei! Oh, mother!—But now I'm all right again. I'll be calm. I'm here now, and must make the best of it."

The soup was brought. Mademoiselle Kramer held a spoonful to Walpurga's lips, and said:

"Take something, my dear, and you'll soon feel better."

"I don't want any broth. Am I to be treated as if I were sick, and forced to eat what I don't like? If there was any one in the house who could make porridge, I'd rather have that than anything else. I'll go into the kitchen and make some myself."

Mademoiselle Kramer was in despair. To her great relief, there was a knock at the door. Doctor Gunther, the king's physician, entered, accompanied by Doctor Sixtus. He held out his hand to the nurse, and said:

"God greet you, Walpurga of the cottage by the lake! You've made a good catch in coming to this house. Don't be alarmed by the ways of the palace, and do just as you would at home. Take my word for it, water is needed for cooking, all the world over. The folks here are just as they are in your neighborhood—just as good and just as bad; just as wise and just as stupid; with this difference, however—here they know how to hide their wickedness and stupidity."

Doctor Gunther had, in part, used the Highland dialect while addressing her, and her face suddenly brightened.

"Thank you! thank you! I'll remember what you tell me," said she, cheerfully.

Mademoiselle Kramer now introduced the great question of the day—beef broth or porridge. Doctor Gunther laughed, and said:

"Why porridge, to be sure; that's the best. In fact, Walpurga, all you need do is to say what you've been used to at home, and you shall have it here, provided it is neither sour nor fat."

Addressing his colleague, he added:

"We'll keep the nurse on her accustomed diet for the present, and afterward can gradually bring about a change. Come here, Walpurga, and let me look into your eyes. I've something to tell you. In a quarter of an hour from now, you're to appear before the queen. Don't be alarmed, no one will harm you. She merely wishes to see you. Don't fail to prove that your eyes are right, when they say they belong to a clever head. Address the queen calmly, and if, as is quite likely, you still feel a homesick yearning for your child and the others you've left behind you, don't show it while you are with the queen. You might cause her to weep and make her ill, for she's very delicate. Do you quite understand me?"

"I do, indeed! I'll be very careful. I'll cheer her up."

"You must not do that either. Remain perfectly calm and composed; speak little, and in a low voice. Try to get out of the room as soon as you can, for she needs all the sleep she can get."

"I'll do everything just as you say. You can depend on me," said Walpurga. "Aren't you going along?"

"No; you'll meet me there. But now, take something to eat. Here comes the porridge. I hope it will do you good. You needn't eat it all; half will do for the present. But wait a little while until it cools. Come with me a moment. I suppose you're not afraid to go with me?"

"No; it seems as if I'd often heard your voice before."

"Very likely! I am also from the Highlands, and have already been in your father's house. If I am not mistaken, your mother was from our region. Was she not in service with the freehold farmer?"

"She was, indeed."

"Well then, your mother's a good woman, and don't forget to tell the queen that she's taking good care of your child. That will please her. I knew your father, too; he was a merry soul, and perfectly honest."

Walpurga felt happy to know that her parents were well thought of and that the others had heard them so favorably mentioned. If the doctor who had known her father had been that father himself, she could not have been more willing to accompany him into the adjoining room. He returned, in a few moments, and left in the company of Doctor Sixtus; and then Walpurga came, her eyes bent on the ground. When she at last looked up, she was glad there was no one in the room but Made-moiselle Kramer.

Her thoughts must have been of home, for she suddenly exclaimed:

"Dear me! I've got you, yet." She then took from her pocket the piece of bread which her mother had given her. And thus the first morsel she ate while in the palace, was brought from home, and was of her mother's baking. Her mother had told her that this would cure her of homesickness; and she really found it so, for, with every mouthful, she became more cheerful.

If seven queens were to have come just then, she would not have been afraid of them, and her crying was at an end. She ate all the crumbs that had fallen into her lap, as if they had some sacred potency. After that she tried a little of the porridge.

"Can't I go somewhere to wash my face and dress my hair?" asked she.

"Of course. Doctor Gunther has given orders that you should."

"I don't need orders for everything I do!" said Walpurga, defiantly.

Mademoiselle Kramer wanted to have her maid dress Walpurga's hair. But Walpurga would not allow it.

"No stranger's hand shall touch my head," said she.

And after a little while she presented a tidy and almost cheerful appearance.

"There, now I'll go to the queen," said she. "How do you address her?"

"'Your majesty,' or, 'most gracious madam.'"

"In the prayers at church they call her the 'country's mother,'" said Walpurga, "and I like that far better. That's a glorious, beautiful name. If it were mine, no one should take it from me. And now I'll go to the queen."

"No! you must wait. You will be sent for."

"That'll suit me just as well. But I want to ask a favor of you. Call me 'Du'." *

"Quite willingly, if the first lady of the bedchamber does not object."

"And so nothing can be done here without asking leave. But now we've done talking, let's be quiet. Ah, yes! there's one thing more. Whose picture is that hanging up there?"

"The queen's."

"Is that the queen? Oh, how lovely! But she's very young."

"Yes, she's only eighteen years old."

Walpurga gazed at the picture for a long while. Then, turning away from it, she sank on her knees beside the great chair, folded her hands and softly whispered a pater-noster.

Walpurga was still kneeling, when a knock at the door was heard. A lackey entered and said:

"Her majesty has sent for his royal highness's nurse."

Walpurga arose and followed the servant, Mademoiselle Kramer accompanying them.

* The familiar "thou."

CHAPTER X.

PRECEDED by a servant bearing a lantern, they passed through the long, narrow, brilliantly lighted passage and ascending a staircase, reached the gallery of the royal chapel. There were cushioned chairs for the court. Walpurga looked down into the vast, dark hall. There was no light except that in the altar lamp, the rays of which faintly illumined the image of the Virgin.

"Thou art everywhere!" said Walpurga, half aloud, while she looked down into the dark church and saluted the Madonna with the Child, as familiarly as if greeting an intimate friend. A dim sense of the divine attributes of maternity, as glorified in ages of song and picture, prayer and sacrifice, filled her soul. She nodded to the picture once again, and then walked on. As uncertain of her steps as if walking on glass, she went through the throne-room, and the great ball-room. Then they passed through other apartments which, though evidently intended for more domestic uses, were without doors and were separated from each other by heavy double hangings. At last they descended a wide marble staircase with a golden balustrade. It was well-lighted and carpeted. Here there were servants and guards. They entered other apartments, which were filled with people, who paused in their eager conversation to glance at Walpurga. In the third room, Dr. Gunther advanced toward her. Taking her by the hand, he led her up to a gentleman who was attired in a brilliant uniform and wore the crosses and medals of many orders.

"This is his majesty, the king," said he.

"I know him; I've seen him before," replied Walpurga. "My father rowed him across the lake, and so did my Hansei, too."

"Then, as we have known each other so long, let us

improve our acquaintance," replied the king. "And now go to the queen; but be careful not to agitate her."

He dismissed her with a gracious inclination of the head and, accompanied by Doctor Gunther and Countess Brinkenstein, whom they found in attendance, she passed through several other rooms, the heavy carpets of which deadened the sounds of their footsteps.

"Be careful not to agitate her." The words greatly troubled Walpurga. Why should she provoke the queen to anger? for that was the only meaning she could take from the word.

Although she did not know what they meant by the word, her being pushed hither and thither, up and down, through passages and rooms without number, encountering the glances of the courtiers by the way and, at last, receiving the king's warning, had had the effect of agitating her.

At last she stood at the threshold of a green apartment that appeared to her like an enchanted room, hollowed out of some vast emerald. A lamp with a green glass shade hung from the ceiling, and shed a soft, fairy-like light on the room and its inmates. And there on the large, canopied bed, with the glittering crown overhead, lay the queen.

Walpurga held her breath; a soft glow illumined the face of her who lay there.

"Have you come?" asked a gentle voice.

"Yes, my queen, God greet you! Just keep yourself quiet and cheerful. All has gone well with you, thank God!"

With these words, Walpurga advanced toward the bedside, and would not suffer Doctor Gunther nor Countess Brinkenstein to keep her back. She offered her hand to the queen. And thus two hands—one hardened by toil and rough as the bark of a tree, the other as soft as the petal of a lily—clasped each other.

"I thank you for having come. Were you glad to do so?"

"I was glad to come, but sorry to leave home."

"You surely love your child and your husband with all your heart."

"I'm my husband's wife, and my child's mother."

"And your mother nurses your child and cares for it with a loving heart?" inquired the queen.

"The idea!" replied Walpurga.

The queen did not seem to know that her answer meant: "That's a matter of course," and she therefore asked: "Do you understand me?"

"Yes, indeed; I understand German," replied Walpurga. "But Your Majesty shouldn't speak so much. God willing, we'll be together in happiness for many days to come. We'll arrange everything when we can look into each other's eyes in broad daylight, and I'll do all I can to please you and the child. I've got over my homesickness and now I must do my duty. I'll be a good nurse to your child; don't let that worry you. And now, good-night! Sleep well, and let nothing trouble you. And now let me see our child."

"Breath of my breath, it lies here, sleeping by my side. How infinite is God's grace, how marvelous are his works!"

Walpurga felt that some one was pulling at her dress, and hastily said:

"Good-night, dear queen. Put all idle thoughts away from you. This is no time to busy yourself thinking. We'll have enough to think of when the time comes. Good-night!"

"No, remain here! You must stay!" begged the queen.

"I must beg Your Majesty—" hurriedly interposed Doctor Gunther.

"Do leave her with me a little while," begged the queen, in childlike tones. "I am sure it will do me no harm to talk with her. When she drew near the bed, and I heard her voice, I felt as if a breath of Alpine air, in all its dewy freshness, was being wafted toward me. Even now I feel as if lying on a high mountain, from which I can look down into the beautiful world."

"Your Majesty, such excitement may prove quite injurious."

"Very well; I will be calm. But do leave her with me a moment longer! Let me have more light, so that I may see her."

The screen was removed from a lamp that stood on a side-table, and the two mothers beheld each other, face to face.

"How beautiful you are!" exclaimed the queen.

"That doesn't matter any longer," replied Walpurga. "God be praised, we've both got over having our heads turned by such nonsense. You're a wife and mother, and so am I."

The screen fell again; the queen, taking Walpurga's hand in hers, said in a gentle voice:

"Bend down to me, I want to kiss you—I must kiss you."

Walpurga did as she was bid, and the queen kissed her.

"You can go now. Keep yourself good and true," said the queen.

A tear of Walpurga's fell upon the face of the queen, who added:

"Don't weep! You, too, are a mother."

Unable to utter another word, Walpurga turned to go, and the queen called after her.

"What is your name?"

"Walpurga," said Doctor Gunther, answering for her.

"And can you sing well?" asked the queen.

"They say so," replied Walpurga.

"Then sing often to my child, or 'our child,' as you call him. Good-night!"

Doctor Gunther remained with the queen. It was some time before he uttered a word. He felt that he must calm her excited feelings, and he had a safe and simple remedy at command.

"I must request Your Majesty," said he, "to return my congratulations. My daughter Cornelia, the wife of Professor Korn of the university, was safely delivered of a little girl, at the very hour in which the crown prince was born."

"I congratulate the child on having such a grandfather. You shall, also, be the grandfather of our son."

"The congratulation that imposes a noble duty upon

its recipient, is the best that can be given," replied Gunther. "I thank you. But we must now cease talking. Permit me to bid Your Majesty good-night!"

Gunther left the room. All was silent.

Instead of taking Walpurga back to the upper rooms, they had conducted her to a well-furnished apartment on the other side of the palace, where, to her great delight, she found Mademoiselle Kramer awaiting her.

"The queen kissed me!" exclaimed she. "Oh, what an angel she is! I'd no idea there were such creatures in the world."

Some time later, when the queen had fallen asleep, two women brought a gilded cradle into Walpurga's room.

When they took the child from the bed, the queen, as if conscious of what was being done, moved in her sleep.

Before taking the child to her bosom, Walpurga breathed upon it thrice. It opened its eyes and looked at her, and then quickly closed them again.

Throughout the palace, all was soon hushed in silence. Walpurga and the child by her side were asleep. Mademoiselle Kramer sat up during the night, and, in the antechamber on either side, there were doctors and servants within call.

CHAPTER XI.

IN the village by the lake, or, to speak more correctly, in the few houses clustered near the Chamois inn, Walpurga's strange and sudden departure caused great commotion.

All hurried toward the inn. The innkeeper assumed a wise air and desired it to be understood that he knew far more than people gave him credit for. The whole affair was, of course, of his planning; for had it not been proven that his acquaintance included even the king himself.

Immediately after Walpurga's departure, he urged Hansei to accompany him to the Chamois, for he well knew that his presence there would prove a far greater attraction than a band of musicians.

Hansei would not go at once, but promised to follow soon afterward. He could not leave home just then.

He went through the whole house, from cellar to garret. Then he went out into the stable, where, for a long while, he watched the cow feeding. "Such a beast has a good time of it, after all," thought he; "others have to provide for it, and wherever it finds a full crib, it is at home."

He went into the room and, silently nodding to the grandmother, cast a hurried glance at the slumbering child. He seated himself near the table and, resting his elbows thereon, buried his face in his hands.

"It still goes," said he, looking up at the Black Forest clock that was ticking on the wall. "She wound it up before she left."

He went out and sat down on the bench under the cherry-tree. The starlings overhead were quite merry, and from the woods a cuckoo called: "Yes, he goes away, too, and leaves his children to be brought up by strangers."

Hansei laughed to himself, and looked about him. Had the wife really gone? She must still be sitting there! How could those who belong together be thus parted?

He kept staring at the seat next to him,—but she was not there.

Half the village had gathered before the garden gate. Young and old, big and little, stood there, gazing at him.

Wastl (Sebastian), the weaver, who had for many years been a comrade of Hansei's, and had worked with him in the forest, called out:

"God greet you, Hansei! Your bread has fallen with the buttered side up."

Hansei muttered sullen thanks. Suddenly, there was a great peal of laughter. No one knew who had been the first to utter the word "he-nurse." It had been rapidly and quietly passed from one to another through the crowd, until it at last reached Thomas, Zenza's son—a bold, rawboned fellow, whose open shirt revealed a brawny chest.

"Walpurga's the crown prince's *she*-nurse, and Hansei's the *he*-nurse."

Wastl opened the gate and entered the garden, the whole crowd following at his heels. They went through garden, house and stable; peeped through the windows, smelled at the violets on the window-shelf, and sat down on the kindling-wood that lay under the shed. The house seemed to have become the property of the whole village. When joy or sorrow enters a home, all doors are open, and the rooms and passages become as a public highway.

"What do they all want?" inquired Hansei of Wastl, who had sat down beside him on the bench.

"Nothing! All they've come for is to see for themselves that the whole thing's true, so they can tell others about it. But they're all pleased with your good luck."

"My good luck! Well, I suppose it had to be," said Hansei, in a tone scarcely suggestive of happiness. "Wastl, it seems as if nothing is to go right with me. I'd just begun to think that everything would go on smoothly as it had been doing, and now, all at once, I've

got to climb another mountain. But you're single and, of course, you can't know how I feel."

"It's very good of you to be so fond of your wife."

"My wife? So fond?"

"I know how you must feel."

Hansei shook his head with an incredulous air.

"Cheer up!" said Wastl. "Many a husband would be glad to be rid of his wife for a year."

"For a year."

"The longer the better, some would say," thought Wastl. "But your wife will come back again and turn your cottage into a palace, and then you'll be king number two!"

Hansei laughed loudly, although he was not in a laughing mood. He felt as if he must go out into the forest, where he should neither hear nor see anything of the world. Confound it all! Why did the wife leave? Was it for this that we married and pledged ourselves to be one for life, come weal come woe?

But Hansei could not get away. Half the village had gathered about him. All spoke of his good-fortune. The owner of the great farm up the road, he who was known as the Leithof bauer, even stopped his team at the garden gate and alighted in order to shake hands with Hansei and wish him joy.

"If you'd like to buy the meadow next to your garden, I'll sell it to you. It's a little too far off for me," said the Leithof bauer. The joiner who lived in the village, and who had long been anxious to emigrate, quickly said:

"You'll do far better if you buy my house and farm. I'll let you have them dirt cheap."

The starlings up in the tree could not out-chatter these people. Hansei laughed heartily. Why, this is splendid! thought he. The whole world comes to offer me house and farm, field and meadow.

"You were right, Walpurga!" said he suddenly. The people stared, first at him and then at each other, and did not know what to make of him.

He stretched his limbs, as if awaking from sleep, and said:

"Many thanks, dear neighbors. If I can ever repay you,

in joy or in sorrow, I'll surely do so. But now, I'll make no change; no, I shant move a nail in the house till my wife comes back."

"Spoken like a man, good and true," said the Leithof bauer, and greater praise could befall no one, than to be thus spoken of by the wealthiest farmer in the neighborhood.

"Would you like to look at my cow?" said Hansei, beckoning to the Leithof bauer, who now seemed the only one on a level with himself.

The Leithof bauer thanked him, but had no time to stop. Before taking his leave, he assured Hansei that he would willingly advise him how to put out his money safely.

His money? Where could it be? Hansei trembled with fear and pressed his hands to his head—he had lost the roll of money! Where was it? He plunged his hand into his pocket. The roll was still there! And now that his hand again clutched it, he was quite affable to those who still remained, and had a kind word for every one.

At last, the villagers had all left, and Hansei could think of nothing better to do than to climb up into his cherry-tree—the true friend that would never desert him, and would give as long as it had aught to give.

He plucked and ate lots of cherries, while he looked at the telegraph wire, and thought: It runs into the palace and I could talk to my wife through it, if I only knew how. He bent forward until he could touch the wire, and having done so, quickly withdrew his hand, as if frightened.

Suddenly he heard a voice calling to him:

"Hansei! where are you?"

"Here I am."

"Come along!" was the answer. It was the priest who had called to him.

Hansei hurried down from the tree and now received the greatest honor that had yet been paid him. The priest beckoned to him, and Hansei approached, hat in hand.

"I wish you joy!" said the priest. "Come along to the inn; the host of the Chamois has opened a fresh tap."

Hansei looked at himself to see what had come over

him. To think of the priest's inviting him to walk with him, and to drink in his company, too!

He received the new honor with dignity. While he walked with the priest, the people whom they met along the road would lift their hats and he would acknowledge their greetings quite affably.

In the large room at the Chamois, where every one was either talking to or of him, he felt so happy that he opened the roll of money, without, however, removing from it from his pocket. He meant to offer the first piece to the priest, so that he might say a mass for Walpurga. But the pieces were so large. They were all crown thalers. And so Hansei merely said:

"I wish you'd say a mass for my wife and child. I'll pay you."

It was already twilight. The guests gradually departed. But Hansei remained sitting there, as if rooted to the spot. At last, he and the inn-keeper were the only ones in the room.

"Now that they've all had a talk at you," said the inn-keeper, "you may as well listen to me. No one means it as kindly with you as I do, and I'm not a fool, either. Do you know what would suit you, Hansei, and would suit your wife still better?"

"What?"

"This is the place for you,—you and your wife! I've been landlord long enough. When your wife comes back, you can say 'good-night' to your cottage and settle yourselves here, where you'll find a good living for your children and your grandchildren. We won't talk about it now; but don't commit yourself to anything else. I'm your best friend; I think I've proved that, this very day. I don't care to make a penny by the affair—quite the contrary."

Oh, how kind they are when all goes well with one!

Hansei sat there for a long while, looking into his glass, and endeavoring to satisfy himself as to who he really was. Then he began to think of his wife again: where she might be, and how it was with her. If he could only go to sleep that very moment and remain asleep until the

year was out; but to sit and wait. . . . He looked up at the clock; it was just striking ten.

"How often you'll have to strike ten before we meet again," thought he to himself.

Hansei almost staggered as he walked through the village. The people who were sitting at their doors, or standing about, saluted him and wished him joy, and he well knew that, far away among the mountains, all were speaking of his good luck. He felt as if he must cut himself into a thousand pieces in order to thank them all.

He was standing near his garden and looking at the hedge. How long was it since he, who had never before known a spot which he could call his home, had prized himself as ever so happy in the possession of a little property! And now the grandmother was sitting in the house, and he heard her singing his child to sleep:

"If all the streams were naught but wine,
And all the hills were gems so fine,
And all were mine :
Yet would my darling treasure be
Dearer far than all to me.

"And since we needs must part,
One more kiss before I start.
Thou remain'st, but I must leave,
And parting sore the heart doth grieve ;
But, though life drags, we'll not despond,
For longer far is the life beyond."

"But though life drags, we'll not despond, For longer far is the life beyond." The words sank deep into Hansei's heart, and the fireflies flitting about in the darkness, or resting on fence and grass, drew his glance hither and thither, as if they were some new and startling phenomenon. Hansei's waking dream continued for some time, and when he, at last, passed his hand over his face, it was wet with the dew. He felt as if some one must carry him into the house and put him to bed. But a sudden turn caused the roll of money to touch his hip, and he was wide awake again. He walked far out along the road, in the same direction that Walpurga had gone, and at last reached the pile of stones on which she had rested a fortnight ago. There was still some hay lying there.

He sat down upon it and gazed out at the broad lake, over which the moon shed its bright rays. It was just as quiet as it had been a fortnight before; but that was in the daytime, and now it was night. "Where can my wife be now?" said he, springing to his feet, so that he might run to her, though it took the whole night. "How glad she will be to have me come to the palace the very first morning she is there!" With giant strides he hurried on. But he could not help asking himself: "How will it be if you have to leave again to-morrow, and what will the folks at home say, and what will grandmother think, left all alone with the child?"

And yet he walked on. Suddenly, he became alarmed at the thought of the money on his person. The neighborhood was safe enough, to be sure. It was long since any crime had been heard of in that region. But still there might be robbers, who, after helping themselves to his treasure, would murder him, and throw him into the lake. . . . Tortured by fear, he hurriedly turned about and ran toward home.

Advancing toward him, he beheld a figure of threatening aspect. He grasped the knife in his belt—"If there's only one, and no other's lying in wait, I'm man enough to defend myself," thought he.

The figure advanced, greeting him from afar. The voice was that of a woman. Could Walpurga have—No, that were impossible.

The figure halted. Hansei advanced toward it and said: "Oh! is it you, Esther, out on the road so late?"

"And is this you, Hansei?" said Black Esther, laughing heartily. "I thought it was some drunken fellow, because I heard you, a great way off, talking to yourself. But, of course, now you're lonely enough, I suppose."

"Do you walk in the woods so late at night, and all alone?"

"I must go alone, if no one goes with me," said Black Esther, with a laugh that fell harshly upon the silent night. There was a pause. Hansei could hear the beating of his heart. Perhaps it was caused by his rapid walking.

"I must go home," said he, at last. "Good-night."

Laying her hand on his shoulder, Black Esther said;

'Hansei, I'm not used to begging and, if it were day, I'd rather starve than ask you for anything. But now, you've a good heart and are doing well; give me something, or lend it to me. I'll give it back to you again.'" She spoke so persuasively that Hansei trembled. Her hand still rested upon him; he was about to feel in his pocket for the crown thaler he had saved from the priest, when he suddenly pushed her hand from his shoulder, and said: "I'll give you something another time." He then ran off toward home. Her shrill laughter rang in his ears, and it sounded as if hundreds of voices were answering from the rocks. His hair stood on end and he felt, by turns, as if shivering with cold and burning with fever. She must surely have been one of the forest demons, who had merely assumed the form of Black Esther. And there really were such beings, for the old forest inspector had, on his deathbed, confessed to having seen one. They wander about when the moon is at its full. Instead of wearing clothes, they merely wind their long hair about their bodies, and on such a night as this, when the mother is away from her child, they can—

Hansei had never before run so fast, or found the road by the lake so long, as on this very night.

He reached home at last and, as if to assure himself that the house was still there, touched the walls with his hands. Nothing had been disturbed. All was as he had left it.

He went indoors. The light in the room was still burning. The grandmother was sitting on a low stool, and had the child on her lap. With one hand, she hid her eyes—they were red with weeping; with the other, she motioned Hansei to step lightly.

Hansei did not observe that there had been, and still was, something wrong with his mother-in-law. He had taken a seat behind the table, was thinking of no one but himself, and felt as tired and ill at ease as if he had just returned from a long and dangerous journey. He was even obliged to remind himself that, although he was at home, it was no longer the right sort of a home. The grandmother placed the child in the cradle and sat down, resting her chin upon her closed hand. Thoughts far different from Hansei's had passed through her mind.

Stasi had remained with the grandmother for some time after Hansei left the house. How it would fare with Walpurga, was a topic of but short duration with them; for what could they say, or know, about that? When it began to grow dark, Stasi spoke of going, and promised to come again the next day. The grandmother nodded assent. She preferred being alone, for then there would be nothing to prevent her thinking of her child. Her prayers followed Walpurga; but the words flowed forth so easily that her mind was elsewhere much of the time. Her first thought was: Walpurga must be saying the same prayer and, although every word lengthens the distance between us, we are together in spirit, nevertheless. She felt happy that Walpurga had turned out so well in all things, and that she could be depended upon. It was hard to be among strangers; but they were men and women, after all. At times, her heart would misgive her, lest Walpurga should not be able to hold out to the end. She has lots of good notions—if she only thinks of them at the right time. "For my sake, if for nothing else, you'll keep yourself pure," said she aloud, as she ended her prayer. All at once, she felt so lonely and forlorn. She had never passed a night without Walpurga, and, looking up at the stars, she wished it were day again. Hansei might just as well have remained at home; still, it was a great honor to be invited by the priest. He'll surely send home a schoppen of wine to gladden grandmother's heart; and if it be only half a schoppen, it'll show his good heart. Her tongue seemed as if parched; she thirsted for the wine, and listened for a long while, in the vain hope that she might hear the footsteps of the inn-keeper's servant, bringing the bottle under her apron. At last, pity for herself made her indescribably miserable, and she burst into tears. Oh, that her husband were still alive! A poor widow woman is always expected to be at hand, but no one thinks of how it fares with her. Tears came to her relief; for, after a little while, she said to herself: "What an awful sinner you are! Isn't it enough to have clothes and food and a home, and never to hear a harsh word? You ought to be thankful that you're still active enough to be of use to others."

As if ashamed of herself, she turned away, wiped the tears from her furrowed face, and then sang cheerful songs to the child. Then she waited silently, until Hansei, at last, returned. And thus he found her, seated beside the cradle and resting her chin upon her clenched hand.

"Where have you been so long?" asked the grandmother, in a low voice.

"I hardly know, myself."

"Walpurga must be in bed by this time."

"Very likely; they can travel fast, four-in-hand."

"Do you hear the cow lowing? The poor beast isn't used to be alone and, this very evening, the butcher drove her calf by the stable. It's awful to hear her moan. Do go and look after her."

Hansei went out to the stable, and the cow became perfectly quiet. He walked away, and she began lowing again. He returned and spoke to her kindly. As long as he talked to her and kept his hand upon her back, she was quiet; but as soon as he left her, she would low more piteously than before. In despair, he was constantly going back and forth, between the room and the stable. He returned several times, gave her some fodder, and then sat down on a bundle of hay. At last the cow lay down and slept, and Hansei, overcome with fatigue, also fell asleep. Indeed, few had ever gone through so much in one day as our poor Hansei had.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Walpurga awoke next morning, she fancied herself at home, and looked at the strange surroundings as if it were all a dream that would not vanish at her bidding. She gradually realized what had happened. Closing her eyes again, she said her prayers and then boldly looked about her; the same sun that shone on the cottage by the lake, shone on the palace, too.

Full of fresh courage, she arose.

She lay at the window for a long while, looking at the scene so strange to her.

She saw nothing of the bustling city. The palace square, encircled by thick, bushy orange-trees, was far removed from the noise of the streets. At the palace gate, two soldiers, with their muskets at rest, were seen marching up and down.

But Walpurga's thoughts wandered homeward. In her mind's eye, she saw the cottage by the lake and all within its walls. In fancy, she heard the crackling of the wood with which her mother kindled the fire, and saw the lamp which she took from the kitchen-shelf. We have milk in the house, for we've got a cow. Mother will be glad to go milking again. I'm sure they never light a fire at home without thinking of me. And the chattering starlings, up in the cherry-tree, are saying:

"Our goodwife is gone; a cow has taken her place."

Walpurga smiled and went on thinking to herself: My Hansei's oversleeping himself this morning. If you didn't call him, he'd sleep till noon; he never wakes of himself. She hears her mother calling: "Get up, Hansei; the sun is burning a hole in your bed!" He gets up and washes his face at the pump, and now she sees them at their meal; the child is fed with good milk. If I'd only taken a good look at the cow! And now Hansei is getting fodder for it from the innkeeper. If he only

doesn't let the rogue cheat him; and Hansei will feel more forlorn than the child; but, thank God, he has work enough to keep him busy. It's fishing time, and so he doesn't go into the woods. I see him jump into his boat; what a noise he makes! The oars are plashing, and away he rows to catch what fish he can.

Walpurga would have gone on picturing to herself her home at noon and at evening. Suddenly, she felt as if she had lost her reason. Absence and death are almost one and the same. You can have no idea of how it will be one hour after your death; you cannot imagine yourself out of the world. Her head swam and, as if startled by an apparition, she turned to Mademoiselle Kramer, and said:

"Let's talk!"

Mademoiselle Kramer required no second hint, and told Walpurga that every one in the palace knew of the queen's having kissed her the night before, and that it would be in all the newspapers of the next day.

"Pshaw!" said Walpurga; whereupon Mademoiselle Kramer declared that, although it made no difference in her case, it was highly improper to answer in that way, and told her, also, that she ought always express herself distinctly and in a respectful manner.

Walpurga looked up and listened, as if waiting for Mademoiselle Kramer to continue and, at last, said: "My dear father once said almost the very same thing to me; but I was too young to understand it then. All I meant to say was, that the city people must have very little to do, if they can make a fuss about such a matter"—mentally concluding her remarks with another "pshaw!"

The little prince awoke. Walpurga took him up and speedily put him to sleep, while she sang in a clear voice:

" Ah, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee,
And swiftly speed the hours by
When thou art near to me."

When she had finished her song, and had placed the child in the cradle, she looked toward the door and beheld the king and Doctor Gunther standing there.

"You sing finely," said the king.

"Pshaw!" said Walpurga, and, acting as her own interpreter, she quickly added, while casting a hurried glance at Mademoiselle Kramer: "It's good enough for home use, but not particularly fine."

The king and Doctor Gunther were delighted with the appearance of the child.

"The day on which one beholds his child for the first time is a red-letter day," observed the king; and Walpurga, as if to confirm what he had said, added:

"Yes, indeed; that makes one look at the world with different eyes. His majesty told the truth that time."

Although her remark caused the king to smile, it was received in silence. Accompanied by Doctor Gunther, he soon left the room. After they had gone, Mademoiselle Kramer endeavored, as delicately as possible, to impress Walpurga with the importance of observing the first commandment:

"You must not speak to their majesties, unless they ask you a question."

"That's sensible," exclaimed Walpurga, to the great surprise of Mademoiselle Kramer. "That prevents you from hearing anything out of the way. What a clever idea! I won't forget that."

During breakfast, in the pavilion, it was plainly to be seen that Mademoiselle Kramer, and perhaps Walpurga, too, had spoken truly. The various groups on the veranda and under the orange-trees were engaged in what seemed to be confidential conversation. After they had sounded each other, and had satisfied themselves that they could safely indulge in scandal, the common topic was the manner in which the queen's sentimentality had manifested itself in her behavior toward the nurse. It was agreed that this mawkishness was an unfortunate legacy from the house of ——. Some even went so far as to say that Countess Brinkenstein was quite ill with anger at the queen's disregard of etiquette.

"The queen's conduct deprives her favors of their value," said an elderly court lady, who must have had at least a pound and a half of false hair on her head.

"Nothing is so great a bore as mawkish sensibility," observed another one of the ladies attached to the palace.

She was corpulent, and piously inclined withal. As if to cover her ill-natured remark with the mantle of charity, she added:

"The queen isn't much more than a child, and really means well at heart."

She had thus made herself safe with both parties—those who praised, and those who abused the queen.

"You look as if you had slept but little," said an elderly lady, addressing a very young and pale-looking one.

"You are right," sighed the latter, in reply. "I sat up to read the last volume of ——" giving the name of a recent unequivocal French novel—"and finished it at a single sitting. I shall return the book to you to-day. It is very interesting."

"Please let me have it next," resounded from several quarters at once.

The pious lady, who had, indeed, read the novel in secret and was loth to talk of such subjects, changed the conversation by introducing the topic of Walpurga. As the latest piece of news, she acquainted them with the report that the nurse could sing beautifully.

"Who sings beautifully?" inquired Countess Irma, joining the group.

"This will interest you, dear Wildenort. You will be able to learn many new songs from Walpurga, and accompany them on the zither."

"I'll wait until we are in the country again. A peasant woman seems strangely out of place in a palace. When does the court return to the country?"

"Not for six weeks."

There was much talk about Walpurga. One lady maintained that Doctor Gunther was a native of the Highlands, and that it was only through his intriguing that a nurse had to be brought from the same region; that he was constantly surrounding himself with allies, and was clever enough to know that this person would exert a great influence upon the queen. They also spoke of the doctor's love of intrigue, and of his affecting to sympathize with the queen in all her extravagant fancies. Of one thing they all felt assured: that it was impossible to

retain the favor of the court for so long a time, by fair means alone.

"The doctor isn't so very old," remarked a very thin lady. "He is only a little over fifty. I think he must have dyed his hair white, in order to appear venerable before his time."

Loud laughter greeted this sally.

Before breakfast, the ladies and gentlemen were in separate groups. A knot of courtiers were discussing the telegrams which had been sent out to various governments, and to which, in some instances, replies had already been received.

It was not until after breakfast that a council of the royal household was to determine who, besides the queen's parents, should be invited to stand as sponsors. It was even reported that the christening would be celebrated by a special papal nuncio, assisted by the bishop.

Countess Irma's brother, the king's aid-de-camp, again diverted the conversation from such lofty topics back to Walpurga. He extolled her beauty and her droll ways, and they smacked their lips, when they spoke of the queen's kiss. The aid-de-camp had given vent to a joke on the subject, at which they laughed uproariously.

"The king!" suddenly whispered several of the gentlemen.

They separated and, while making their obeisance, arranged themselves in two rows. The king, acknowledging their salutation, passed between the rows and entered the hall of Diana, where breakfast was served. The frescoes on the ceiling represented the goddess with her hunting train, and had been painted by a pupil of Rubens. The lord steward handed a packet of telegrams to the king, who instructed him to open them, and inform him when they contained anything more than congratulations.

They now sat down to breakfast.

The company was not so cheerful and unconstrained as it had been at the summer palace. Indeed, no one had yet recovered from the excitement of the previous night, and conversation was carried on in a quiet tone.

"Countess Irma," said the king, "I commend Walpurga to you; she will be sure to please you. You will

be able to learn some beautiful songs from her, and to teach her new ones."

"Thanks, Your Majesty! If Your Majesty would only deign to order the first lady of the bedchamber to grant me access, at all times, to the apartments of His Royal Highness the crown prince."

"Pray see to it, dear Rittersfeld!" said the king, turning to the lord steward.

Countess Irma, who sat at the lower end of the table, received the congratulations of all. Walpurga had become the sole topic of conversation.

The morning papers were brought to the king. He glanced through them hurriedly and, throwing them aside with an angry air, said:

"This babbling press! The queen's kiss is already in all the newspapers." His face darkened; it was evident that, as the fact itself had displeased him, the publicity given it was doubly annoying. After a time, he said:

"I desire you, gentlemen and ladies, to see to it that the queen does not hear of this." He rose quickly, and left the apartment.

The breakfast party lingered for some time, and the pious lady could now openly join the ranks of the scandal-mongers. The mantle of charity was no longer necessary—it was very evident that the king had already tired of his sentimental wife.

If Countess Irma—? Who could tell but what this was part of a deep-laid plan to give her free access to the crown prince's apartments? The king could meet her there—and who knows but that—

They were quite ingenious in the malicious conjectures which they whispered to each other with great caution and circumspection. For a while, at least, Walpurga, the queen and even the crown prince were completely forgotten.

CHAPTER XIII.

“THERE, my boy! Now you’ve seen the sun. May you see it for seven and seventy years to come, and when they’ve run their course, may the Lord grant you a new lease of life. Last night, they lit millions of lamps for your sake. But they were nothing to the sun up in heaven, which the Lord himself lighted for you this very morning. Be a good boy, always, so that you may deserve to have the sun shine on you. Yes, now the angel’s whispering to you. Laugh while you sleep! That’s right. There’s one angel belongs to you on earth, and that’s your mother! And you’re mine, too! You’re mine, indeed!”

Thus spake Walpurga, her voice soft, yet full of emotion, while she gazed into the face of the child that lay on her lap. Her soul was already swayed by that mysterious bond of affection which never fails to develop itself in the heart of the foster-mother. It is a noble trait in human nature that we love those on whom we can confer a kindness. Their whole life gradually becomes interwoven with our own.

Walpurga became oblivious of herself and of all that was dear to her in the cottage by the lake. She was now needed here where a young life had been assigned to her loving charge.

She looked up at Mademoiselle Kramer, with beaming eyes, and met a joyful glance in return.

“It seems to me,” said Walpurga, “that a palace is just like a church. One has only good and pious thoughts here; and all the people are so kind and frank.”

Mademoiselle Kramer suddenly smiled and replied:

“My dear child—”

“Don’t call me ‘child’! I’m not a child! I’m a mother!”

“But here, in the great world, you are only a child. A court is a strange place. Some go hunting, others go

fishing; one builds, another paints; one studies a *rôle*, another a piece of music; a dancer learns a new step, an author writes a new book. Every one in the land is doing something,—cooking or baking, drilling or practicing, writing, painting, or dancing—simply in order that the king and queen may be entertained.”

“I understand you,” said Walpurga, and Mademoiselle Kramer continued:

“My family has been in the service of the court for sixteen generations”;—six would have been the right number, but sixteen sounded so much better;—“my father is the governor of the summer palace, and I was born there. I know all about the court, and can teach you a great deal.”

“And I’ll be glad to learn,” interposed Walpurga.

“Do you imagine that every one is kindly disposed toward you? Take my word for it, a palace contains people of all sorts, good and bad. All the vices abound in such a place. And there are many other matters of which you have no idea and of which you will, I trust, ever remain ignorant. But all you meet are wondrous polite. Try to remain just as you now are, and, when you leave the palace, let it be as the same Walpurga you were when you came here.”

Walpurga stared at her in surprise. Who could change her?

Word came that the queen was awake and desired Walpurga to bring the crown prince to her.

Accompanied by Doctor Gunther, Mademoiselle Kramer and two waiting-women, she proceeded to the queen’s bedchamber. The queen lay there, calm and beautiful, and, with a smile of greeting, turned her face toward those who had entered. The curtains had been partially drawn aside and a broad, slanting ray of light shone into the apartment, which seemed still more peaceful than during the breathless silence of the previous night.

“Good-morning!” said the queen, with a voice full of feeling. “Let me have my child!” She looked down at the babe that rested in her arms and then, without noticing any one in the room, lifted her glance on high and faintly murmured:

"This is the first time I behold my child in the daylight!"

All were silent; it seemed as if there was naught in the apartment except the broad slanting ray of light that streamed in at the window.

"Have you slept well?" inquired the queen. Walpurga was glad that the queen had asked a question, for now she could answer. Casting a hurried glance at Mademoiselle Kramer, she said:

"Yes, indeed! Sleep's the first, the last, and the best thing in the world."

"She's clever," said the queen, addressing Doctor Gunther in French.

Walpurga's heart sank within her. Whenever she heard them speak French, she felt as if they were betraying her; as if they had put on an invisible cap, like that worn by the goblins in the fairy tale, and could thus speak without being seen.

"Did the prince sleep well?" asked the queen.

Walpurga passed her hand over her face, as if to brush away a spider that had been creeping there. The queen doesn't speak of her "child" or her "son," but only of "the crown prince."

Walpurga answered:

"Yes, quite well, thank God! That is, I couldn't hear him, and I only wanted to say that I'd like to act toward the—" she could not say "the prince"—"that is, toward him, as I'd do with my own child. We began right on the very first day. My mother taught me that. Such a child has a will of its own from the very start, and it won't do to give way to it. It won't do to take it from the cradle, or to feed it, whenever it pleases; there ought to be regular times for all those things. It'll soon get used to that, and it won't harm it either, to let it cry once in a while. On the contrary, that expands the chest."

"Does he cry?" asked the queen.

The infant answered the question for itself, for it at once began to cry most lustily.

"Take him and quiet him," begged the queen.

The king entered the apartment before the child had stopped crying.

"He will have a good voice of command," said he, kissing the queen's hand.

Walpurga quieted the child, and she and Mademoiselle Kramer were sent back to their apartments.

The king informed the queen of the dispatches that had been received, and of the sponsors who had been decided upon. She was perfectly satisfied with all the arrangements that had been made.

When Walpurga had returned to her room and had placed the child in the cradle, she walked up and down and seemed quite agitated.

"There are no angels in this world!" said she. "They're all just like the rest of us, and who knows but—" she was vexed at the queen: "Why won't she listen patiently when her child cries? We must take all our children bring us, whether it be joy or pain."

She stepped out into the passageway and heard the tones of the organ in the palace chapel. For the first time in her life, these sounds displeased her. It don't belong in the house, thought she, where all sorts of things are going on. The church ought to stand by itself.

When she returned to the room, she found a stranger there. Mademoiselle Kramer informed her that this was the tailor to the queen.

Walpurga laughed outright at the notion of a "tailor to the queen." The elegantly attired person looked at her in amazement, while Mademoiselle Kramer explained to her that this was the dressmaker to her majesty the queen, and that he had come to take her measure for three new dresses.

"Am I to wear city clothes?"

"God forbid! You're to wear the dress of your neighborhood, and can order a stomacher in red, blue, green, or any color that you like best."

"I hardly know what to say; but I'd like to have a workday suit, too. Sunday clothes on week-days—that won't do."

"At court, one always wears Sunday clothes, and when her majesty drives out again you will have to accompany her."

"All right, then. I won't object."

While the tailor took her measure, Walpurga laughed incessantly, and he was at last obliged to ask her to hold still, so that he might go on with his work. Putting his measure into his pocket, he informed Mademoiselle Kramer that he had ordered an exact model, and that the chief master of ceremonies had favored him with several drawings, so that there might be no doubt of success.

Finally, he asked permission to see the crown prince. Mademoiselle Kramer was about to let him do so, but Walpurga objected. "Before the child is christened," said she, "no one shall look at it just out of curiosity, and least of all, a tailor, or else the child will never turn out the right sort of man."

The tailor took his leave, Mademoiselle Kramer having politely hinted to him that nothing could be done with the superstition of the lower orders, and that it would not do to irritate the nurse.

This occurrence induced Walpurga to administer the first serious reprimand to Mademoiselle Kramer. She could not understand why she was so willing to make an exhibition of the child. "Nothing does a child more harm than to let strangers look at it in its sleep, and a tailor at that."

All the wild fun with which, in popular songs, tailors are held up to scorn and ridicule, found vent in Walpurga, and she began singing:

"Just list, ye braves, who love to roam!
A snail was chasing a tailor home,
And if Old Shears hadn't run so fast,
The snail would surely have caught him at last."

Mademoiselle Kramer's acquaintance with the court tailor had lowered her in Walpurga's esteem, and with an evident effort to mollify the latter, she asked:

"Does the idea of your new and beautiful clothes really afford you no pleasure?"

"To be frank with you, no! I don't wear them for my own sake, but for that of others, who dress me to please themselves. It's all the same to me, however! I've given myself up to them, and suppose I must submit."

"May I come in?" asked a pleasant voice. Countess

Irma entered the room. Extending both her hands to Walpurga, she said:

"God greet you, my countrywoman! I am also from the Highlands, seven hours distance from your village. I know it well, and once sailed over the lake with your father. Does he still live?"

"Alas! no; he was drowned, and the lake hasn't given up its dead."

"He was a fine-looking old man, and you are the very image of him."

"I am glad to find some one else here who knew my father. The court tailor—I meant the court doctor—knew him, too. Yes, search the land through, you couldn't have found a better man than my father, and no one can help but admit it."

"Yes: I've often heard as much."

"May I ask your ladyship's name?"

"Countess Wildenort."

"Wildenort? I've heard the name before. Yes, I remember my mother's mentioning it. Your father was known as a very kind and benevolent man. Has he been dead a long while?"

"No, he is still living."

"Is he here, too?"

"No."

"And as what are you here, Countess?"

"As maid of honor."

"And what is that?"

"Being attached to the queen's person; or what, in your part of the country, would be called a companion!"

"Indeed! And is your father willing to let them use you that way?"

Countess Irma, who was somewhat annoyed by her questions, said:

"I wished to ask you something—can you write?"

"I once could, but I've quite forgotten how."

"Then I've just hit it! that's the very reason for my coming here. Now, whenever you wish to write home, you can dictate your letter to me, and I will write whatever you tell me to."

"I could have done that, too," suggested Mademoi-

selle Kramer, timidly; "and your ladyship would not have needed to trouble yourself."

"No, the countess will write for me. Shall it be now?"

"Certainly."

But Walpurga had to go to the child. While she was in the next room, Countess Irma and Mademoiselle Kramer engaged each other in conversation.

When Walpurga returned, she found Irma, pen in hand, and at once began to dictate.

"Dear husband, dear mother, and dear child. No, stop! don't write that! Take another sheet of paper. Now I've got it, now you can go on."

"I wish to let you know, that by the help of God, I arrived here safe and sound, in the carriage with the four horses. I don't know how. And the queen's an angel, and there were millions of lights, and my child—"

Walpurga covered her face with both hands—she had said "my child," without knowing which child she meant.

A pause ensued.

"And my child," said Countess Irma, repeating the words after her.

"No!" exclaimed Walpurga, "I can't write to-day. Excuse me; there's no use trying. But you've promised to write for me to-morrow or the day after. Do come and see us every day."

"And shall I bring a good friend with me?"

"Of course; any friend of yours will be welcome. Isn't it so, Mademoiselle Kramer?"

"Certainly; Countess Irma has special permission."

"I'll bring a very good friend with me; she can sing charmingly, and her voice is soft and gentle—but I'll not torment you with riddles; I play the zither, and will bring mine with me."

"You play the zither?" exclaimed Walpurga, scarcely able to contain herself for joy."

Any further expressions on her part were prevented by the presence of the king, who entered at that moment.

With a gentle inclination of the head, he greeted Countess Irma, who had risen from her seat and bowed so low that it seemed as though she meant to sit down on the floor.

"What are you writing?" asked the king.

"Walpurga's secrets, may it please Your Majesty," replied Countess Irma.

"The king may read all that's there," said Walpurga, handing him the sheet.

He hurriedly ran his eye over it, and then, with a glance at the countess, folded it and put it in his breast pocket.

"I shall sing with Walpurga," said Irma, "and Your Majesty will again observe that music is the highest good on earth. Singing together, Walpurga and I are equals. The creations of other arts, poetry especially, may be translated by every one into his own language, according to the measure of his knowledge and experience."

"Quite true," replied the king; "music is the universal language, the only one that requires no translation, and in which soul speaks to soul."

While they were thus talking, Walpurga stared at them in dumb amazement.

The king, accompanied by Countess Irma, looked at the prince for a little while, and then, having said: "The christening will take place next Sunday," he withdrew.

It was with a strange expression that Walpurga's eyes followed the king and then rested in earnest gaze upon Countess Irma.

The countess busied herself with the papers, and then, with cheerful voice, took leave of Walpurga. Her cheerfulness almost seemed constrained, for she laughed while there was nothing to laugh at.

For a long while, Walpurga stood looking at the curtains, behind which the countess had disappeared, and at last said to Mademoiselle Kramer:

"You told the truth, when you said that the palace isn't a church."

She did not enter into any further explanation.

"I will teach you how to write," said Mademoiselle Kramer; "it will be pleasant employment for us, and you will then be able to do your own writing to your family."

"Yes, that I will," said Walpurga.

CHAPTER XIV.

“I WANT to ask a favor of you,” said Walpurga to Countess Irma, the next day. **“Always tell me frankly whenever I do anything wrong.”**

“Quite willingly; but, in return, you must always tell me when I—”

“Then I’ve something on my heart, this very moment.”

“Speak out.”

“Some time when we’re alone together, I will.”

“Pray, dear Kramer, would you oblige me by retiring for a few moments?”

Mademoiselle Kramer went into the adjoining room, and Walpurga could not help feeling astonished when she observed how, in the palace, people were pushed hither and thither, just like so many chairs.

“And now, what is it?” inquired the countess.

“You won’t think ill of me, if I say anything foolish; you’re sure you won’t?”

“What is it?” asked Irma again.

“You’re so beautiful, so very beautiful; more so than any one I’ve even seen; you’re even more beautiful than the queen—no, not more beautiful, but more powerful, and your eyes are full of kindness—”

“Well what is it? speak out.”

“I’d rather think I’m wrong; but it’s best to feel sure. Well, I didn’t like the way you and the king looked at each other yesterday; while your hand was on the cradle-rail, he placed his upon it; and he’s a husband and a father. You’re an unmarried girl, and don’t know what it means when a man looks at you in that way; but I’m a married woman, and it’s my duty to warn you. You said that we’d be good friends, and now there’s a chance to test our friendship.”

Irma shook her head, and replied:

“You mean well enough; but you’re mistaken. The

king has a noble heart and, since the birth of his son, would like to make every one as happy as he is himself. He loves his wife dearly and, as you have seen for yourself, she's an angel—"

"And if she weren't an angel, she's his wife and the mother of his child, and he must be true to her; for with every glance he gives another woman he's a confounded adulterer, whose eyes ought to be put out. Look here! If I were to think that my husband could do such a thing—but the men are wicked enough to do anything—that a man could stand by the cradle of his new-born babe, and let the same eyes with which he had just been looking at his child tell another woman, 'I love you,'—if I were to think that, I'd go mad. And if a man whose hand has pressed that of a woman not his wife, can offer his hand to that wife, or touch his child's face with it, the world in which such things could happen ought to be burned up and the Lord ought to shower pitch and brimstone down on it."

"Speak softly, Walpurga; don't scream so. Don't let such words pass your lips. You are not here to look after our morals, nor is it for you to pass judgment. What do you know of the world? You've not the slightest idea of what politeness means."

Countess Irma's words were harsh and severe, and had deeply humbled Walpurga.

"Now that you know who you are and what you are about, I've something more to tell you: I forgive you for insulting the king and myself with your silly talk. If I didn't pity your ignorance, I would never speak to you again; but, as I feel kindly disposed toward you, and know that you meant no harm, I shall give you a bit of advice. No matter what may happen, don't concern yourself about it. Attend to your child, and let no one induce you to speak ill of others. Take my word for it—here, all are deceitful. They are ever ready to speak ill of one another, and unless you are very careful you'll not have a friend in the whole palace. Mind you don't forget what I've said to you. And now I must thank you once more for having spoken to me as you did. You meant it all well enough, and it is proper that you should

be perfectly frank. I shall always be your good friend. Although one treats the king respectfully, he is, nevertheless, as good as your Hansei, and I'm as good as you. And now, let's shake hands! Let bygones be bygones. Whatever you do, not a word of this to Kramer; and don't forget that, hereabouts, the walls have ears."

Without saying another word, Countess Irma began the melody of a Highland song upon her zither.

Walpurga could hardly realize what had happened to her. She was provoked at her own stupid and forward behavior, and was firmly resolved to keep her own counsel in the future.

While Irma was playing, the king again passed through the *portière* and stopped to listen. Irma did not look up; her eyes were fixed upon her zither. When she had finished, the king applauded faintly. She arose and bowed, but did not accompany the king when he went into the adjoining chamber to look at the prince.

"Your zither is in perfect tune, dear countess, but you seem to be somewhat out of tune," said the king, as he came back into the room.

"I am in tune, Your Majesty," replied Countess Irma. "I've just been playing an air to Walpurga, and it has deeply affected me."

The king left very soon afterward, and without offering his hand to the countess. Walpurga's saddest thought was that she dared not even trust Mademoiselle Kramer.

"Oh, you poor child!" said she to the prince, one day, when no one was by. "Oh, you poor, dear child! you're expected to grow up among people who don't trust each other. If I could only take you with me, what a fine boy you'd become. You're still innocent—children, until they begin to speak, are the only innocent creatures in this world. But what matters it? I didn't make the world, and needn't change it. The countess is right. I'll nurse you well, care for you tenderly, and leave the rest to God."

CHAPTER XV.

“YOUR wish is fulfilled at last,” said Countess Irma to Doctor Gunther, just as they were rising from the dinner-table.

“What wish?”

“I now have a female friend, a companion, and, in the words of the song, ‘you’ll ne’er find a better.’ ”

“Your treatment of the peasant woman is quite amiable and does you great credit, but she is not a friend. Your friend should be one who is your equal. Your relation toward this peasant woman will always be that of a patron. She never dare find fault with you, and if she were to make the attempt, you could readily silence her. Mere common-sense is defenseless against the armory of culture.”

Without noticing how Irma started at these words, the doctor calmly continued:

“There’s just as much difference, mentally, between yourself and such a type of popular simplicity as there is between a grown person and a child. I fear you’ve neglected to secure yourself a friend who is your equal in birth.”

“My equal in birth? So you, too, are an aristocrat?”

The doctor explained that equality of rights could be conceded without doing away with social distinctions.

“Whenever I leave you,” said Irma, her face radiant with enthusiasm—**“whenever I’ve been under the influence of your thoughts, all that I do or attempt seems petty and trifling. At such moments, I feel just as I do after listening to glorious music, and long to accomplish something out of the usual way. I wish I were gifted with artistic talent.”**

“Content yourself with being one of nature’s loveliest works. That’s the best thing to do.”

The doctor was called away.

Irma remained seated for some time, and at last repaired to her room, where she amused herself with her parrot. Then, after looking at her flowers for a while, she began to copy them in colors on a slab of marble. She evidently intended it to be a rare work. But for whom? She knew not. A tear fell on a rose, the color in which was still wet. She looked up and left her work. Then she dried the tear, and found herself obliged to paint the rose anew.

On the day before the christening, Walpurga dictated the following letter to Countess Irma:

"To-morrow will be Sunday, and I'll try to be with you, too. In thought, I'm always there. It seems as if it were seven years since I left home. The day's ever so long here, and there are more than three times as many people in the palace as could get into our church. There are lots of married servants here who have servants of their own; there are none but tall, fine-looking men in service here. Mademoiselle Kramer tells me that their lordships don't care to have any but handsome people about them; and some of them are as prim and proper as a parson. They call them lackeys, and whenever the king goes near one of them, they bow very low and double up with a snap, just like a pocket-knife. Oh, what lots of good things I have! If I could only send you some of them. I'm ever so glad that we shall go to the country palace in four weeks and stay there till autumn. But how's my child, and how goes it with Hansei and with mother, and you too, Stasi? In my sleep at night, I'm always with you. I can't sleep much, for my prince is a real night-watchman, and the king's doctor said I mustn't let him cry as much as Burgei does at home. But he has good lungs, and to-morrow is the christening. The queen's brother and his wife are to be godfather and godmother, and there'll be lots of princes and princesses besides. And I've got beautiful new dresses and two green hats with gold lace, and two silver chains for my stomach-er, and I can take them all home with me when I go, but that won't be for a long while. If all the weeks are as long as last week, I'll be seven hundred years old when I get home. I'm quite lively again. But, at first, it

seemed as if I could always hear the lowing of the cow in the stable.

"She who writes this is the Countess Wildenort, from over beyond the Chamois Hill; she's a very good friend of mine. She knew our dear father, too, and you, mother, know of her family.

"And I've something to tell you, Hansei. Don't have too much to do with the innkeeper; he's a rogue, and he'll talk your money out of your pocket. There are good folks and bad everywhere; at home with us and here too; and the king's doctor says you mustn't give the cow any green fodder, nothing but hay, or else the milk won't agree with the child.

"I'm learning to write. Indeed I'm learning a great many things here.

"And tell me what the people say about my leaving home so suddenly, and about my having left at all.

"But I don't care what they say. I know I've done my duty by my child; my husband, and my mother.

"And, dear mother, take a servant-girl into the house; we can afford it now.

"And, Hansei, don't let the innkeeper wheedle you out of your money. Put it out safely at mortgage, till we have enough to buy a few acres of land.

"And don't forget, Wednesday's the day on which father died; have a mass said for him.

"We've got a church in the house here, and I hear the organ every morning, while I stand in the passage. Tomorrow will be a great day, and I remain your ever faithful

"WALPURGA ANDERMATTEN.

"I send you a little cap for my child; let her wear it every Sunday. A thousand greetings to all of you, from your

"WALPURGA."

CHAPTER XVI.

“OH, how lovely! How beautiful!—And is it all mine?—And is it you, Walpurga, of the cottage by the lake?—How proud she’ll be!”

Such were Walpurga’s extravagant expressions of delight, while she stood looking at herself in the full-length mirror. Mademoiselle Kramer was indeed obliged to hold her back, lest she should rush through the glass in her eager desire to embrace the figure she saw reflected in it.

The court tailor had sent home the new clothes. It was difficult to decide which was the most beautiful—the stomacher, the skirt, the collar, the shirt with the short, wide sleeves—but no! the narrow-rimmed hat, trimmed with flowers and gold lace and with gold tassels, was the most beautiful of all. It fitted perfectly, and was as light as a feather. “There, I’ll just move it a little to the left. Gracious me!—Well, you are beautiful! The folks are right!” She placed her arms akimbo and danced about the room, like one possessed. And then, placing herself before the mirror, she stared into it, silently, as if lost in contemplation of her own image.

Ah, that mirror! Walpurga had never before seen her full figure, from head to foot. What could she see in the twopenny looking-glass at home? Nothing but the face and a little of the neck!

She lifted her hand to her throat. It was encircled by a necklace composed of seven rows of garnets and fastened in front with an agraffe. And how clever Mademoiselle Kramer was! How many things she could do!

She had placed a large mirror behind Walpurga, who could now see how she looked in the back, and on all sides. Oh, how clever these people are! What do they know out our way? Nothing of the world, and less about themselves!

"And this is how Walpurga looks to those who walk behind her? And so," turning herself on one side, "and so," turning again on the other. "I must say, I like your looks; you're not out of the way, at all! So that's Hansei's wife? He ought to feel satisfied with her; but then, he's good and true and has well deserved her."

Giddy with excitement, Walpurga thus talked to herself; it was the first time that she had ever seen a full length reflection of herself.

The first stranger who saw her thus was Baum.

He always wore shoes without heels and, putting down his whole foot at once, managed to step so softly that you could never know when he was coming. He always approached with a modest air, as if fearful of disturbing you, but always kept his own counsel and was an available tool, no matter what the nature of the service might be.

"Oh! how pretty!" he exclaimed, staring at her as if quite lost with admiration.

"It's nothing to you, sirrah, at any rate," said Walpurga; "you're a married man and I'm a married woman."

Assuming an air of command, and acting as if these were the first words uttered since he entered the apartment, Baum went on to say:

"It's the lord steward's pleasure that the nurse shall come to the court chapel immediately, if His Royal Highness the crown prince, is asleep. The rehearsal is about to begin."

"I've tried my clothes on," answered Walpurga.

Baum told her that it had nothing to do with trying on clothes, but that, excepting the highest personages, all who were to take part in the grand ceremonies of the morrow, were now to rehearse the order of the procession, so that there might be no confusion.

Walpurga went with Baum.

The ladies and gentlemen of the court were assembled in the throne-room. Most of them were eagerly engaged in conversation, and the confused sound of many voices was strangely echoed back from the high, vaulted ceiling. When Walpurga entered, she could hear them whisper-

ing on all sides. Some spoke French, but others used plain German, to say that the nurse was a fine specimen of a Highland peasant woman. Walpurga had a smile for every one, and was quite unembarrassed.

The lord steward, bearing a gold-headed stick in his hand, now stationed himself on the lowest step of the throne, which had been covered with an ermine mantle. He struck the floor thrice with the stick and then held it up. Every one was provided with a printed programme, and Walpurga also received one. After reading it to the company, the lord steward enjoined its strict observance on all. The procession now moved toward the chapel, passing through the picture-gallery and the portrait-gallery, by the way. The open space before it presented the appearance of an enchanted garden. It was filled with exotic trees, and the air was laden with the odor of flowers. The chapel was also decorated with flowers and shrubbery; and the paintings on the ceiling represented angels flying about in the air.

Countess Brinkenstein, whose appearance was even more austere than on the first evening, was engrossed with her official duties; this was no time for her to be ill.

She cautioned Walpurga, who walked beside her, to be very careful how she carried the prince, and earnestly enjoined her not to withdraw her arms until she felt quite certain that the prince was safely in his godfather's arms.

"Of course I won't; I'm not that stupid," said Walpurga.

"I require no answer from you." Countess Brinkenstein was vexed at Walpurga. She was indeed displeased with the queen, who, she thought, was spoiling the poor servant, but found it more convenient to vent her resentment upon Walpurga than upon so exalted a personage as her majesty.

The various groups were chatting and laughing in as careless a tone as if they were in a ball-room instead of a church.

The lord steward, who had stationed himself at the altar, inquired whether all were in readiness.

"Yes," was answered from various quarters, amid much laughter.

Walpurga looked up at the image of the Virgin, which she had seen by the light of the everlasting lamp on the evening of her arrival,—it was the first time she saw it by daylight—and said: “Thou, too, must look on while they rehearse.” She now fully understood Mademoiselle Kramer’s remark that, for royalty, everything must be arranged in advance. But was it right to do so with sacred matters? It must be, thought she, or they wouldn’t do it. The court chaplain was there too, but not in his ecclesiastical robes. She saw him taking a pinch from the golden snuff-box of the lord steward, with whom he was talking just as if they were in the street.

And so this is the rehearsal, thought Walpurga to herself, when Countess Brinkenstein approached and said that, as she now knew her place for the morrow, she might go. She also ordered Walpurga to wear white cotton gloves, and said that she would send her several pairs.

Walpurga went out by way of the throne-room and the picture-gallery. Without looking about her, she walked through numerous apartments, and suddenly found herself standing before a large, dark room. The door was open, but she could not see where it led to. She turned in alarm, for she had lost her way. All was silent as death. She looked out of the window and saw a street that she had never seen before. She knew not where she was, and hurried on; from a distance, she could see strange men and beasts and places on the walls, and suddenly she uttered a shriek of terror, for the devil himself, black as pitch, came toward her, gnashing his teeth.

“O Lord! Forgive me! I’ll never be proud and vain again! I’ll be good and honest,” she cried aloud, wringing her hands.

“What are you making such a noise about? who are you?” exclaimed the devil.

“I’m Walpurga, from the lake; and I’ve a child and husband and mother, at home. I was brought here to be the crown prince’s nurse, but indeed, I didn’t want to come.”

“Indeed! and so you’re the nurse. I rather like your looks.”

“But I don’t want you, or any one else, to like my looks.

I've a husband of my own and want nothing to do with other men."

The black fellow laughed heartily.

"Then what were you doing in my master's apartments?"

"Who's your master? I've nothing to do with him. I and all good spirits praise God the Lord! Speak! What is it you want of me?"

"Oh, you stupid! My master is the queen's brother. I'm his *valet de chambre*. We arrived here last evening."

Walpurga could not understand what it all meant. Luckily for her, at that moment, the duke and the king came out of the apartment.

Addressing the Moor in English, the duke inquired what had happened; answering in the same tongue, the Moor said that the peasant woman had taken him for the devil incarnate; upon hearing which, the duke and the king laughed heartily.

"What brings you here?" inquired the king.

"I lost my way, after leaving the chapel," replied Walpurga. "My child will cry. Do please show me the way back to him."

The king instructed one of the lackeys to conduct her to her apartments. While going away she overheard the uncle, who was to be chief sponsor, saying: "What a fine milch-cow you've brought from the Highlands!"

When she had returned to her room, and again beheld herself in the large mirror, she said:

"You're nothing but a cow that can chatter, and is dressed up in clothes! Well, it served you right."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE night was a bad one. The crown prince suffered because of the fright which the Moor had given his foster-mother. Doctor Gunther sat up all night, in the adjoining room, so as to be within ready call, and was constant in his inquiries as to Walpurga and the child. He instructed Mademoiselle Kramer never again to allow the nurse to leave the room without his permission.

To Walpurga this imprisonment was welcome, as she wished to have nothing more to do with the whole world; for the child filled her soul and, while she lay on the sofa, she vowed to God that nothing else should enter her mind. She looked at the new clothes that were spread out on the large table and shook her head; she no longer cared for the trumpery. Indeed, she almost hated it, for had it not led her into evil? and had not the punishment quickly followed?

Walpurga's sleep was broken and fitful, and whenever she closed her eyes, she beheld herself pursued by the Moor. It was not until near daybreak, that she and the child slept soundly. The great ceremony could therefore take place at the appointed time.

Baum brought the beautiful pillows and the brocaded coverlet embroidered with two wild animals. While passing Walpurga, he softly whispered:

"Keep a brave heart, so that you don't get sick again; for if you do, they will discharge you at once. I mean well by you, and that's why I say so."

He said this without moving a feature, for Mademoiselle Kramer was to know nothing of it.

Walpurga looked after him in amazement; and Baum, indeed, presented quite an odd appearance, in his gray linen undress uniform.

"And so they'll send you away when you get sick," thought she to herself. "I'm a cow. They're right."

There's no longer any room in the stable for a cow that's barren."

"I and thou and the miller's cow—" said she, to the prince, as she again took him to her bosom, while she laughed and sang:

"Cock a doodle doo!
The clock strikes two;
The clock strikes four,
While all sleep and snore.

Be it palace or cot,
It matters not,
Though they cook sour beets,
Or eat almonds and sweets—
As long as they care
For the little ones there."

Walpurga would have said and sung much more that day, were it not for the constant hurrying to and fro in the prince's apartments. Countess Brinkenstein came in person, and said to Walpurga:

"Have you not all sorts of secret charms which you place under the pillow for the child's sake?"

"Yes, a twig of mistletoe will do, or a nail dropped from a horse-shoe; I'd get them quick enough if I were at home; but I've nothing of the sort here."

Walpurga felt quite proud while telling what she knew of the secret charms; but grew alarmed when she looked at Countess Brinkenstein and saw that her face wore an expression of displeasure.

"Mademoiselle Kramer," said she, "you will be held responsible if this peasant woman attempts to practice any of her superstitious nonsense with the child."

Not a word of this was addressed to Walpurga, who had persuaded herself into believing that she was the first person in the palace, and now, for the first time, experienced the mortification of being ignored, just as if she were nothing more than empty air.

"I won't lose my temper, in spite of you. And I won't do you the favor to get sick, so that you may send me off," muttered Walpurga, laughing to herself, while the countess withdrew.

And now followed a beautiful and happy hour. Two maidens came, who dressed the prince. Walpurga also allowed them to dress her, and greatly enjoyed being thus waited upon.

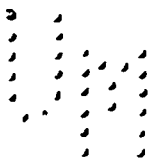
All the bells, throughout the city, were ringing; the chimes of the palace tower joined in the merry din, and almost caused the vast building to tremble. And now Baum came. He looked magnificent. The richly-embroidered uniform with the silver lace, the scarlet vest embroidered with gold, the short, gray-plush breeches, the white stockings, the buckled shoes—all seemed as if they had come from some enchanted closet, and Baum well knew that he was cutting a grand figure. He smiled when Walpurga stared at him, and knew what that look meant. He could afford to wait.

"One should not attempt to reap too soon," had been a favorite saying of Baroness Steigeneck's valet, and he knew what he was about.

Baum announced a chamberlain and two pages, who entered soon afterward.

Heavy steps and words of command were heard from the adjoining room. The doors were opened by a servant and a number of cuirassiers entered the room. They were a detachment from the regiment to which the prince would belong, as soon as he had received his name.

The procession that accompanied the prince moved at the appointed hour. The chamberlain walked in advance and then came Mademoiselle Kramer and Walpurga, the pages bringing up the rear. It was fortunate for Walpurga that Baum was at her side, for she felt so timid and bashful, that she looked about her as if imploring aid. Baum understood it all and whispered to her: "Keep up your courage, Walpurga!" She merely nodded her thanks, for she could not utter a word. Bearing the child on her arms, she passed through the crowd of cuirassiers who, with drawn swords and glittering coats of mail, stood there like so many statues. Suddenly, she thought of where she had been last Sunday at the same hour. If Hansei could only see this, too. And Franz, tailor Schenck's son, is in the cuirassiers—perhaps he, too, is among those lifeless ones; but they must be alive, for



their eyes sparkle. She looked up, but did not recognize the tailor's son, although he was in the line.

The prince's train, with its escort, passed on to the so-called grand center gallery, where the procession was forming.

Walpurga had been told to seat herself with the prince on the lowest step of the throne, and when she looked about her she beheld a sea of splendor and beauty. There were richly embroidered costumes, lovely women, their heads adorned with flowers, and jewels that sparkled like dew-drops on the meadow at early morn.

"Good-morning, Walpurga! Pray don't rise," said a pleasant voice, addressing her. It was Countess Irma. But she had scarcely commenced speaking to her, when the lord steward thrice struck the floor with his gold-headed stick, the diamonds on which sparkled brightly.

A train of halberdiers, wearing gay plumes on their helmets, marched in from a side apartment. And then the king came. He carried his helmet in his left hand and at his side. His face was radiant with happiness.

At his side walked the duchess, a diamond crown on her head, and with two pages bearing her long silk train. She was followed by a numerous and brilliant suite.

Irma had hastened to her appropriate place. The bells were slowly tolling, and the procession moved. At the entrance of the palace chapel, the duchess took the child from the nurse and carried it up to the altar, where priests, clad in splendid robes, were awaiting it, and where countless lights were burning.

Walpurga followed, feeling as if bereft—not only as if the clothes had been torn from her body, but as if the body had been rent from her soul. The child cried aloud, as if aware of what was taking place, but its voice was drowned by the tones of the organ and choir. The whole church was filled with a mighty volume of sound, which descended from the gallery and was echoed back from the floor beneath, like sullen, muttering thunder. Involuntarily, Walpurga fell on her knees at the altar—there was no need to order her to do so.

Choir, organ and orchestra burst forth with a mighty volume of sound, and Walpurga, overwhelmed with awe



and surprise, imagined that the end of the world had come and that the painted angels on the ceiling,—aye, the very pillars, too—were swelling the heavenly harmonies.

Suddenly all was silent again.

The child received its names. One would not suffice: there were eight; a whole section of the calendar had been emptied for its benefit.

But from that moment until she reached her room, Walpurga knew nothing of what had happened.

When she found herself alone with Mademoiselle Kramer, she asked:

“Well, and what am I to call my prince?”

“None of us know. He has three names until he succeeds to the throne, when he himself selects one, under which he reigns, and which is stamped on the coins.”

“I’ve something to tell you,” said Walpurga, “and mind you don’t forget it. You must send me the first ducat you have stamped with your name and your picture! See! he gives me his hand on it!” cried she, exultingly, when the child stretched out its little hand as if to grasp hers. “Oh, you dear Sunday child! Let the first lady of the bedchamber say it’s superstition—it’s true, for all. I’m a cow and you’re a Sunday child, and Sunday children understand the language of the beasts. But that’s only once a year—at midnight on Christmas eve. But as you’re a prince, I’m sure you can do more than the rest.”

Walpurga was called into the queen’s apartment, the dazzling beauty of which suggested a glittering cavern in fairy-land. All was quiet; here nothing was heard of the noisy, bustling crowd overhead. The queen said:

“On that table you will find a roll containing a hundred gold pieces. It is your christening present from my brother and the other sponsors. Does it make you happy?”

“Oh, queen! If the lips on these gold pieces could speak, the hundred together couldn’t tell you how happy I am. It’s too much! Why, you could buy half our village with it! With that much you could buy—”

“Don’t excite yourself! Keep calm! Come here.

- and I'll give you something else, for myself. May this little ring always remind you of me, and may your hand thus be as if it were mine, doing good to the child."

"Oh my queen! How happy it must make you to be able to speak right out when your heart is full of kind thoughts, and to have it in your power to do so many great and good actions; besides, God must love you very much, to permit so much good to be done by your hand! I thank you with all my heart! And to Him who has given it all to you, a thousand thanks!"

"Walpurga, your words do me more good than all that the archbishop and the rest of them said. I shall not forget them!"

"I don't know what I've said—but it's all your fault! When I'm with you, I—I hardly know how to say it—but I feel as if I were standing before the holy of holies in the church. Oh, what a heavenly creature you are! You're all heart! I'll tell the child of it, and though it doesn't understand what I say, it'll feel it all. From me it shall get only good thoughts of you! I beg your pardon now, if I should ever offend you, even in thought or do anything out of the way—" She could say no more.

The queen motioned Walpurga to be quiet and held out her hand to her; neither spoke another word. Angels were indeed passing through the silent room.

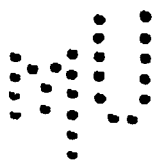
Walpurga went away. It was self-confidence, not boldness, that made her look straight into the faces of the courtiers whom she passed by the way. As far as she was concerned, they did not exist.

When she was with the child again, she said:

"Yes, drink in my whole soul! It's all yours! If you don't become a man in whom God and the world can take delight, you don't deserve a mother like yours!"

Mademoiselle Kramer was amazed at Walpurga's words. But the latter did not care to tell what was passing in her mind. There was perfect silence, and yet she sat there, motionless, as if she could still hear the organ and the singing of the angels.

"It isn't this that makes me so happy," said she, looking at the money once more. "It must be just this way when one gets to heaven and the Lord says: 'I'm glad



you've come!' Oh, if I could only fly there now! I don't know what to do with myself."

She loosened all her clothes; the world seemed too close and confined to contain her.

"God be praised! the day's over," said she, when she lay down to rest that evening. "It was a hard day, but a beautiful one; more beautiful than I'll ever see again."

CHAPTER XVIII.

(IRMA TO HER FRIEND EMMA.)

“YOU ask me how I like the great world. The great world, dear Emma, is but a little world, after all. But I can readily understand why they term it ‘great.’ It has a firmament of its own. Two suns rise daily; I mean their majesties, of course. A gracious glance, or a kind word, from either—and the day is clear and bright. Should they ignore you, the weather is dull and dreary.

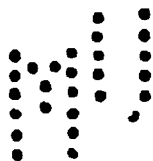
“The queen is all feeling, and lives in a transcendental world of her own into which she would fain draw every one. She suggests a ‘Jean Paul’ born after his time, and is of a tender, clinging disposition, constantly vacillating between the dawn and twilight of emotion, and always avoiding the white light of day. She is exceedingly gracious toward me, but we cannot help feeling that we do not harmonize.

“I know not why it is, but I have of late frequently thought of a saying of my father’s: ‘Whenever you find yourself on friendly or affectionate terms with any one, imagine how he would seem if he had become your enemy!’

“The thought follows me like a phantom, I know not why. It must be my evil spirit.

“All here regard me as wonderfully naïve, simply because I have the courage to think for myself. I have not inherited the spectacles and tight-lacing of tradition. The world seems to follow the fashion, even in clothing the inside of their heads.

“I admire the first lady of the bedchamber most of all. She is the law incarnate, carefully covered with *poudre de riz*. The ladies here ridicule her, but I have only pity for those who are obliged to resort to the use of cosmet-



ics. Ah, you can have no idea, my dear Emma, how stupid and bored some persons are when unable to indulge in scandal. There are but few who know how to enjoy themselves innocently. But I am forgetting that I intended to tell you about Countess Brinkenstein.

"She read me a lecture on etiquette. What a pity that I cannot give it you, word for word. She said many pretty things; for instance,—that we have as little right to doubt in matters of etiquette as in religion, that, in either case, reasoning always led to heresy and schism, and that one ought to feel happy to have the law ready made, instead of being obliged to frame it.

"Countess Brinkenstein, like Socrates the peripatetic, teaches by example. In the park of the summer palace there is a jutting rock, from the top of which a fine view can be obtained. It is protected on all sides by an iron rail. 'Do you observe, my dear countess,' said this high priest of etiquette to me—for she seems to have conceived quite an affection for your humble servant—'it is because we know there is a railing, that we feel perfectly safe here. If it were not for that, we should become too dizzy to remain. It is just the same with the laws of court etiquette; remove the railing and there will be some one falling every day.'

"The king enjoys conversing with Brinkenstein and, although decorous and dignified demeanor best pleases him, he is not averse to unconstrained cheerfulness. The queen is too serious; she is always grand organ. But one cannot dance to organ music, and as we are still young, we often feel like dancing. Brinkenstein must have commended me to the king, for he often addresses me, and in a manner that seems to say: 'We understand each other perfectly.' "

"June 1st (at night).

"It is a pity, dear Emma, that what I have written above bears no date. I have completely forgotten when I wrote it—*auld lang syne*, as it says in the pretty Scotch song.

"I feel the justice of your complaint, that my letters are written for myself and not for the one to whom they are addressed; that is, whenever I feel like writing, but

not when you happen to wish for news. But you are wrong in charging this to egotism. I am not an egotist. I am wholly absorbed by the impressions of the moment. Ah, why are you not here with me! There is not a day, not a night, not an hour— But I shall do better. That is, I mean to try, at all events.

“The king distinguishes me above all others, and I enjoy the favor of the whole court. If it were not for the demon that ever whispers to me—

“I send you my photograph. We are now wearing wings on our hats, and the feather you see on mine was taken from an eagle that the king shot with his own hand.

“Oh, what lovely days and nights we are having! If one could only do without sleep. I am giving great attention to music and sing nothing but Schumann. His music invests the soul with a magic veil, with a fire that seems to consume while it fills you with happiness, and from the spell of which none can escape, though they try ever so hard. I gladly yield to its influence. I have just been singing ‘The heavens have kissed the earth.’ It was late at night, and I felt as if I could go on singing forever. You know my habit of repeating the same song again and again; of all things a *pot-pourri* of the emotions is least to my liking. At last I lay down by the window—who was it that glided past? I dare not say. I do not care to know. There was a humming in the direction of the lamp on my table. A moth-fly had flown into it and had been consumed by the flame. The moth had not wished to die; it had imagined the light to be a glowing flower-cup, and had buried itself in it.

“It was a beautiful death! To die in the summer night, amid song and in the light of the fiery calyx. Good-night!”

“June 3d.

“No matter where I am or what I do, I am always excited, without knowing why. But I have it, after all. I am constantly thinking that this letter to you is still lying in my portfolio. If any one at court knew what I have written—I have already been on the point of burning these sheets. I beg of you, destroy them. You will,—

will you not? or else conceal them in some safe place. I cannot help it, I must tell you all.

"The queen is very kind to me. Her present condition invests her with a touching, I might almost say, a sacred character.

" 'Man is God's temple,' said the archbishop, who paid us a visit yesterday, 'and of no one is this so true as of a young mother; above all, a young royal mother.'

"What a noble thought!

"I now think quite differently of the queen. When she said to me, yesterday: 'Countess Irma, the king speaks of you with great affection, and I am very glad of it,' I thought to myself: Blessed be the etiquette that permits me to bend down before the queen and kiss her hand.

"Her hand is now quite full and round."

"June 5th.

"The most cheerful hours are those we spend at breakfast. I do not know how, after such olympic moments, the rest can content themselves with every-day matters, for I always wing my flight into the boundless realm of music.

"The king is very kind to me. He is of a noble and earnest character. While I was walking with him in the park, yesterday, and we both kept step so beautifully, he said:

" 'You seem like a true comrade to me, for we always walk together in perfect step. No woman has ever walked thus with me. With the queen I am always obliged to slacken my usual pace.'

" 'That is only of late, I suppose.'

" 'No, it is always so. Will you permit me, when we are alone, to address you as my good comrade?'

"We stopped where we were, like two children who have lost their way in the woods and do not know where they are.

" 'Let us return,' was all I could say.

"We went back to the palace. I admire the king's self-control, for he at once entered into earnest conversation with his minister. Such self-control can only result from great education and innate mental power.

"But there is one thing more. Let me confide it to you.

"I feel sure that the queen meditates a step which must needs be fraught with evil to the king, to herself, and to who knows how many more. I would have liked to acquaint him with my fears, but I dared not speak of the queen at that time, and Doctor Gunther, the king's physician, had made me afraid to utter a word on the subject. I am talking in riddles, I know. I will explain all to you at some future day, if you remind me of it. In a few weeks, all will be decided. My lips are not sealed, for the queen has confided nothing to me. I have simply reasoned from appearances. But enough of this. I shall no longer torment you with riddles.

"My best friend, after all, is Doctor Gunther. He is great by nature, and still more so by education. He is always up to his own high standard. I have never yet seen him confused or uncertain. The old-fashioned phrase, a 'wise man,' is, indeed, applicable to him. He is not fond of so-called 'spirituality' or 'intellectuality,' for he is truly wise. He has great command of language. His hands are beautiful, almost priestly, as if formed for blessing. He never loses his equanimity and, what is best of all, never indulges in superlatives. When I once mentioned this to him, he agreed with me, and added: 'I should like to deprive the world of its superlatives for the next fifty years; that would oblige men to think and feel more clearly and distinctly than they now do.'

"Do you not, dear Emma, perfectly agree with this? Let us found an *anti-superlative* society. I admire the man, but will never be able successfully to imitate him. Through him, I have learned to believe that there have been great and wise men on earth. While yet a surgeon in the army, he was my father's friend. Afterward, he filled a professorship in Switzerland, and, for the last eighteen years, has been physician to the king. You would be delighted with him. To know him, is to enrich one's life. If I were to write down all his sayings, half the charm were lost, for you would lose the spell of his presence. He has a most convincing air and a sonorous voice, and I have heard that he used to sing very

well. He is a perfect man, and loves me as if I were his niece. I shall have much more to tell you about him. Above all things, I am glad that he has a fine vein of humor. This furnishes the salt and prevents him from being included among the class of sugar-water beings.

"Colonel Bronnen is his best, perhaps his only intimate, friend, and the doctor recently told me that the colonel's manner and appearance greatly resemble that of my father while a young man."

June 15th.

"Ah, how hateful, how horrible is the thought of man's birth and death! To die—to be laid in the earth, and to know that the eyes that once glowed with life, and the lips that once smiled, are to decay. The very idea is a barbarous one. Why do we know of death? We must be immortal, or else it were terrible that we human beings should alone know that we must die. The moth-fly did not know it. It simply thought the burning light was a lovely flower, and died in that belief.

"Since last evening, we have been greatly concerned for the queen, indeed, for a double life. She was so good, so angelic.—But no, she still is, and will remain so. She will live. I have prayed for it with all my heart. Away with doubts! My prayer must avail.

"When I met the king to-day he scarcely looked at me, and it is better for me, that it should be thus. A feeling was beginning to bud within me, and now I pluck it out by the roots. It dare not be. I will be his comrade; his good, his best comrade.

"My piano, my music, my pictures, my statuettes, my bird—all seem strange to me. A human being, a two-fold life, is in mortal danger. What does all the trumpery in the world amount to now? All of it together cannot save a human life. Is original sin a truth, and is it because of that, that man must pass through the throes of death before he can behold the light?

"I would like to read, but there is no book that can serve one in such moments. One cannot even think. Nothing, nothing can be done. All the wisdom in all the books is of no avail."

"June 16th.

"Hallelujah! I have just come from church. Oh, that my song could reach you. I have just sung the Hallelujah as if I were pouring out my whole soul to God above.

"Hallelujah!

"All is well!

"The crown prince is born!

"The queen is doing well. The king is happy; the world is bright, and the blue sky overhead is cloudless.

"God be praised, that I have so soon escaped from my perplexing doubts. Perhaps it was all imagination, after all. There was not the slightest ground for my alarm.

"I am but a silly cloister plant, after all, and do not yet understand the ways of the court. Is it not so? I see you laughing at me, and see the dimples in your cheeks. I send you many kisses. Ah, all are so good and pious, and holy, and happy, and— If I could only compose, I should produce some great work. A mute Beethoven dwells within my soul."

"July 18th.

"The crown prince's nurse is a peasant woman from the Highlands. At the king's desire, I paid her a visit. I was standing by the prince's cradle, when the king approached.

"Softly he whispered to me: 'It is indeed true; there is an angel standing by my child's cradle.'

"My hand was on the rail, and his hand rested on mine.

"The king left the room, and just imagine what happened afterward.

"The nurse, a fresh and hardy-looking peasant woman, with shrewd blue eyes—a perfect rustic beauty, indeed, to whom I had been kind in order to cheer up, and prevent her from growing homesick—now turned upon me and told me harshly, and to my face: 'You're an adulteress; you've been exchanging love-glances with the king!'

"Emma, I now feel the force of what you have often said to me: 'You idolize the people; but they are just as sinful and corrupt as the great world, and without education to curb and restrain them.'

"But what is the peasant woman to me, after all? Certain persons exist, only in so far as they serve our purposes.

"No, she is a good and sensible woman, and has asked me to forgive her boldness. I shall remain her friend. I shall, indeed."

"June 25th.

"The king evinces the greatest kindness toward me. It is only yesterday that he remarked to me, while passing:

"Should you ever have a secret, confide it to me."

"He knows full well that I could hardly go to my brother, as a sister should, and that my father is so far away.

"Colonel Bronnen, of the queen's regiment, is very attentive to me. He is usually quite reserved. Ah, how I envy those who possess such self-control. I have none. The demonstrative are always flattering themselves that their irrepressibility is simple honesty, whereas it is nothing but weakness.

"Bronnen tells me that you write to him at times. Can it be possible that a single thought of yours enters this palace, without being mine?

"I am delighted to know that we return to the summer palace in a fortnight from now. Cities ought to vanish during the summer. We ought to be able to transport our houses into the woods, among the mountains, or in the valleys, and in the winter they might be brought together again.

"Last evening, while we were sitting on the verandah, we were greatly amused by a joke of my brother Bruno's. He gave us a description of what might happen if the feet of all the four-post bedsteads in the city were endowed with life and, with their contents, were to come stalking along the garden-walks. It was very droll. Of course, there was some little that was scarcely proper; but Bruno, with all his impertinence, has so charming a manner that he knew how to couch his descriptions in most discreet yet piquant terms.

"It was this that suggested the idea of a migration of houses.

"It was a lively evening, full of merry jests that still seem to ring in my ears while I write to you.

"The king has a new walking-stick—he has quite a collection of such—and this one pays court to me.

"I am said to be intellectual, and this walking-stick is intellectual *par excellence*, and 'birds of a feather flock together,' you know.

"It is Baron Schnabelsdorf, privy councilor of one of the legations.

"Picture to yourself a dapper, beardless bachelor, always in faultless attire. Every one of the few hairs left him is made to do service, and is artistically brushed up into the form of a cock's comb. He passes for an authority in matters of statecraft. He has just returned from Rome, and was formerly attached to the embassies at Paris and Madrid and, if I am not mistaken, that at Stockholm, also. He is a fluent and ready anecdotist. He must have a familiar spirit who crams for him, for he knows everything, from the cut of Queen Elizabeth's sleeve to the latest discoveries in the milky-way and the recent excavations at Nineveh. The ladies and gentlemen have several times amused themselves by reading up one or more articles in the encyclopedia, and then directing their conversation to the subjects they had prepared themselves upon. But the omniscient Baron was, even then, better informed as to dates and circumstances than they were. He is always provided with a *bonbonnière* full of piquant anecdotes. He is almost constantly with the king, and it is rumored that a high position will soon be conferred upon him.

"What do you think of it? had I better marry him?

"My brother would like me to do so and, although he stoutly denies it, I still believe that Schnabelsdorf sent him to broach the affair to me. I could not help laughing, if I were to stand at the altar with this learned walking-stick. But it is, nevertheless, very flattering to know that so learned a man desires me as his spouse.

"I must be excessively learned and clever, and you ought to respect me accordingly.

"A thousand greetings and kisses, from

"Your ever spoiled

"IRMA.

“P. S.—The queen’s brother, the hereditary prince of —, was at the christening, and his wife was also present. She rarely utters a word, but is beautiful. It is reported that the hereditary prince intends to seek a divorce from her, as she is childless. If, as really seems to be the case, she loves her husband, how terribly the poor thing must feel. She must have noticed my interest in her, for she treats me with marked favor, and has more to say to me than any one else. She wishes me to ride with her. The christening ceremonies were impressive and beautiful. At church, I wore a white moiré dress, and a veil fastened to my *coiffure*.

“At the banquet, Baron Schoning, the chamberlain, escorted me to the table. I am regarded here as of a highly poetic temperament, and the chamberlain has already presented me with a copy of his poems. (You know them. He has disguised his sublime emotions in the Highland dialect.) He affects my company and, while at table, told me lots of fearfully silly stuff. Well, as I was going to say, at the banquet I wore a dress of sea-green silk, cut out square *à la madonna*, and in my hair a simple wreath of heather. They all said that I looked very well, and I am inclined to believe that they told the truth.”

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE at the palace again moved in its wonted channel. Bulletins as to the condition of the queen and the crown prince, were no longer issued. The amnesty which had been proclaimed in consequence of the happy event, had been received with satisfaction throughout the land.

Irma spent much of her time in the crown prince's apartments, and endeavored to enter into the feelings of the peasant woman who had been transplanted into a world that was entirely new and strange to her. She was greatly amused by the droll conceits that this new life awakened in Walpurga. Her peculiar way of looking at things was frequently in accord with Walpurga's simple-minded notions, and when Irma was absent, the nurse would speak to the child for hours, endeavoring, as it were, to outdo herself with all sorts of droll expressions which, eccentric as they were, failed to satisfy her.

A strong and deep spring of happiness and content, earnest resolve and all that makes men true, welled up from Walpurga's soul and ministered to the benefit of the babe that she had pressed to her bosom; the child had become as a part of herself.

With constant regularity the prince was daily carried to the queen. That was the event of the day, after which life, in the crown prince's apartments, went on in its usual course.

Doctor Gunther now relaxed his orders; for one day, he said: "The weather is charming, and it will do the child good to send him out of doors a little while. We arrange it in this way:—At eleven o'clock, you can

drive out with Walpurga and the prince, as far as the Nymph's Grove. Arrived there, you can walk about with the child under the pines, or can sit down, if you wish to do so. After remaining there about half an hour, you will return and at once remove to the new apartments. You have taken good care of yourself, Walpurga; continue to do so. Let nothing move you from your accustomed ways, and you will continue to afford pleasure to all of us, as well as to yourself."

Walpurga was quite beside herself with happiness. "We're going out riding," said she to the child, when the physician had left. "God sends you everything good while you are asleep. But you'll let me have some, too, won't you? for you've a good heart, and I've given you mine."

Walpurga would have continued in this vein for a long while, but Mademoiselle Kramer came up and, while gently patting her cheeks, said: "You'll have red cheeks again. Show your love for the prince, with calmness and moderation, and not with such extravagant expressions."

"You're right," said Walpurga. "It's true; I'm not always so. I was always cheerful, but prudent at the same time: not so giddy as I now am," said she, after she had walked up and down the room several times, and at last sat down by the window. "I'll tell you what ails me."

"Indeed, does anything ail you?"

"Yes, the worst of all ills. I've nothing to do. I don't know what to put my hands to. This constant talking, dressing and undressing, eating and drinking, with nothing else to do, makes me stupid. The next time the doctor comes, tell him to give me some work. I'll carry wood or do anything that is to be done. They're mowing the grass in the palace garden, and if I could only be down there with them, I'd feel the better of it. No man could beat me at mowing grass. Grubersepp often used to say that the women sharpened their scythes seven times as often as the men, but that never happened with me."

"Oh, that would never do. But I shall see that you get some exercise."

"Come, you're to go out of doors, into the fresh air," said Walpurga to the prince.

"Thy cage is open! Fly away,
Far o'er land and sea.
But tell me, birdie; tell me pray,—
Where can my darling be?"

"What a pity that the birds have stopped singing. Yes, dear child, they only sing so long as there are young ones in the nest; but I shall have you in my nest for a whole year, and I'll sing better than the birds could,"—and she sang:

"Ah, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee,
And swiftly speed the hours by
When thou art near to me.

"My heart doth bear a burden, love,
And thou hast placed it there—
And I would wager e'en my life
That none doth heavier bear."

"Brava! charming!" said Countess Irma, entering the room. "I should like to learn that song. Sing it again."

Walpurga repeated it and, at the second verse, Irma joined in the song.

"It doesn't really suit a child," said Walpurga, "but what does such a youngster know about lowing cows or singing birds? It's all one to him. We're going out riding to-day. Do you go with us?"

"I would be glad to ride with you, but I may not," replied Countess Irma.

"Then you're not allowed to do whatever you please."

Her words surprised Irma: "What do you mean?" asked she, sharply.

"Forgive me, if I've said anything stupid. I only meant to say you're in service as well as the rest of us. You're a maid of honor, I believe."

"All must serve some one; the king and queen serve God."

"We must all do that."

"Yes, but princes have a much harder time of it than we, for theirs is a far greater responsibility. But what am

I saying? You ought to feel happy that you needn't know everything. I've brought some writing copies for you. I owe you thanks for one thing, already. Ever since I've resolved to teach you, my own writing has become far plainer than before—"

Irma suddenly checked herself, for she realized the full force of what she had been saying, and continued: "for you are to learn it thoroughly."

Baum came to announce that the carriage was waiting. Irma left, saying that she would meet Walpurga in the park.

They now went out and Baum let down the carriage steps for them. Mademoiselle Kramer, who was the first to enter, held the child until Walpurga had seated herself. Baum jumped up behind and took his place beside the second lackey; the four horses stepped out and the carriage started.

"Are we driving?" asked Walpurga.

"Certainly."

"It seems like flying. I can't hear the least rumbling of the wheels."

"Of course you can't. The tires are covered with india-rubber."

"And so they wear cloth shoes just as we do when we walk on smooth floors. Oh, how clever they all are here. Out yonder, they don't know a thing. They live just like cattle; the only difference is they don't eat grass—but what's the matter?" said she, starting with fright. "They're beating the drums and the soldiers are rushing toward us. Is there a fire somewhere?"

"That's on our account. The guard always present arms when a member of the royal family passes by—watch them. They're presenting arms and after we've passed they'll lay their muskets aside and return to the guard-room. Their regiment is known as the crown prince's, for it belongs to him."

"And so he'll have live soldiers to play with when he grows up."

Mademoiselle Kramer showed all the self-command befitting one who could boast of a line of sixteen ancestors. A slight start and an odd, nervous twitching of the

features, as if suppressing a yawn, were the only visible effects of Walpurga's words. But of laughter there was not a sign. An upper servant of the right sort must hear and see all that is going on, and yet stand by as if he were no more than the table or plate that can be moved about at will; and although Walpurga was not her superior, it would not do to laugh at her, for she was nurse to his royal highness the crown prince. Mademoiselle Kramer therefore refrained from laughing, and, as if to evade answering, merely said: "When we pass the guard on our way home, the same thing will happen again."

"And may I ask what's the good of it all?"

"Certainly; there is a good reason for everything, and this serves to accustom the people, and especially the soldiers, to show proper respect to their superiors."

"But our prince don't know anything of that."

"We must show our respect for him, even though he know nothing of it; and now let me tell you something which it would be well for you to know. Whenever you speak or think of their majesties, the king and queen, let it be as 'his majesty' or 'her majesty,' but never simply as king and queen, so that you may never so far forget yourself as to speak of them in a disrespectful manner. Bear this in mind."

Walpurga scarcely heard a word of what she said.

"Oh, Lord!" she exclaimed, "how wisely they've arranged everything. It must have taken many thousand years before they could get so far."

"It has, indeed. But you needn't nod to every one you see bowing. It isn't meant for you."

"But I'd like to do it for my prince, until he can attend to it himself. They all show how glad they'll be to get a look at him. They all bow to you, my child—you're well off, indeed—oh, what a lovely carriage this is. It's as soft as a bed, and as comfortable as a room, and you can sit here and see all that's going on outside, and—dear me, how fast we're going."

They turned into the park. The carriage drove slowly while they passed the lake, and Walpurga was ever saying:

"I feel as if I were in fairyland."

They alighted by the shady and fragrant Grove of the Nymphs. As soon as she had left the carriage, Walpurga, who was carrying the child in her arms, said:

"Open your eyes! Look about you! The whole world's yours. There are trees and meadows and, overhead the blue sky. But your father can't give you that; you'll have to earn it by being good, and if you and I both remain good, we'll meet again, up above."

"Sit down here, Walpurga, and pray cease talking," said Mademoiselle Kramer.

She was terribly anxious about Walpurga, who talked incessantly and incoherently, and was as unmanageable as a young foal that had just been let loose in the meadow.

For this reason, Mademoiselle Kramer again remarked: "Speak softly, and address all your remarks to me. I should be sorry if the lackeys behind us were making sport of you. Do you see the outrider over there? He is my nephew." Walpurga had not, until then, noticed that two lackeys, one of whom was Baum, were following them. The carriage was being driven up and down the side avenues. Suddenly Walpurga stopped, as if spell-bound, before a marble figure.

"Isn't it beautiful?" asked Mademoiselle Kramer.

"Fie!" replied Walpurga. "It's abominable; and to think of men and women walking about here and looking at such an object."

When the old king had the statues placed in the park, Mademoiselle Kramer had deemed them objectionable, but as their majesties had found them beautiful, she had gradually come to look upon them in the same light.

They went into a side avenue, where Walpurga sat down on a bench and, falling into a reverie, soon knew as little of the world as did the child in her arms.

"Who's there?" said she, as if awakened from sleep.

Riding between two horsemen, she beheld a lady mounted on a glossy black steed. Her riding-habit was of blue and the long flowing veil fastened to her hat was of the same color.

"It looks like the countess."

"It is she, and now they dismount. His majesty the king and their royal highnesses the hereditary prince and

princess, are with her. They are coming this way," said Mademoiselle Kramer. "Keep your seat. As nurse, you need not trouble about being polite."

But Walpurga could not help putting her hands up to her hat, in order to feel whether the tassel at the back and the flowers in front were still in place.

Mademoiselle Kramer begged their highnesses not to look at the sleeping child, lest they might awaken it.

Irma was the first to speak. "How deeply significant are all of nature's laws. The waking eye arouses the sleeping child. In the depths of every human soul, an infant soul rests sleeping, and it is not well to permit either sympathy or idle curiosity to disturb it."

"I would like to know how you always manage to have such original thoughts," replied the king.

"I don't know," replied Irma, playing with her riding-whip. "I've courage enough to say what I think, and that passes for originality. Nearly all human beings are changelings. They were changed while in the cradle of education."

The king laughed. Walpurga, however, quickly turned her thumbs inward, and said:

"Changelings. It's wrong to speak of anything of that sort before a child that's less than seven months old, for the evil spirits are all powerful up to that time, even if the child is christened."

In order to exorcise any evil spell from the child, she breathed upon it thrice.

The princess looked sadly at the nurse and the child, but did not utter a word.

"I don't understand a word of what the nurse says," remarked the hereditary prince.

Walpurga blushed scarlet.

"Why do you look at me so?" asked Countess Irma, "don't you know me?"

"Of course I do, but do you know who you look like? like the Lady of the Lake. When she rises from the waves, her dress hangs about her in a sea of folds just like yours."

Irma laughed, while she, in High German, told the prince and princess what the nurse had been saying. The

prince nodded to Walpurga much as he would have done with a dumb animal to which he could not render himself intelligible.

"But Countess Irma's feet are not swan's feet. Don't believe that, Walpurga," said the king laughing. "Come, 'Lady of the Lake.'"

They mounted their horses and rode away.

It was time for the prince to return.

On their return, they at once repaired to the new apartments on the ground floor, into which everything had been removed during their absence.

They now had sunlight at all hours of the day. The apartments opened out on the park, where the blackbird sang in the broad daylight, and where the breezes were laden with the odor of the orange bushes. Tall trees were whispering in the wind and a great fountain was constantly murmuring and plashing.

Walpurga was quite happy, and the fountain was her greatest delight.

"It's far more comfortable on the first floor," she would often say; "I feel as if I'd just returned from a long journey. The rooms are so nice and cool, and my night-watchman sleeps in the daytime just as a night-watchman should, and—and—"

And Walpurga, too, fell asleep, although 'twas daylight.

CHAPTER II.

WALPURGA soon accustomed herself to her changed mode of life. She was often concerned because she received no tidings from home.

But if there were no letters, there was a messenger at all events. A servant entered the room and said:

"There's a woman outside, who comes from the same place as Walpurga. She wishes to speak to you for a few moments."

"I'll go to her. Who is it?"

"No," said Mademoiselle Kramer; "receive her here."

The servant went out at once, and returned, bringing old Zenza with him.

"Oh, is it you, Zenza? Have you brought me anything from my child, my husband, or my mother? For God's sake, has anything happened? Are they sick?"

"No, they're all well, thank God, and send their love to you."

Walpurga, with an affectionate glance, gazed into Zenza's cunning eyes, which now seemed good and truthful, because they had seen her child. Smiling, Zenza went on to say:

"I'm glad you still know me. How bad the folks are. They told me you wouldn't recognize me, because you'd become a fine lady. But no, you always were a good girl, and I've always said so."

"Yes, yes, that's all very well; but what do you want of me?"

"I want you to help me. If you don't, my son Thomas will take his life and I'll drown myself in the lake. You'll help me, won't you? See, I'm kneeling at your feet. You must help me. Your dear father and I were almost cousins, and if your father were alive, he'd say what he's now calling down to you from heaven—'Walpurga, if you don't help Zenza, I'll never forgive you.'"

"Get up! What's the matter? How can I help you?"

"I won't get up. I'll die at your feet unless you promise to help me."

"I'll do all I can for you."

Mademoiselle Kramer interposed and said that unless Zenza would calm herself, she would not be allowed to remain in the room another moment.

Zenza arose and asked:

"Is that the queen?"

Walpurga and Mademoiselle Kramer laughed at her question, and Zenza at last made known her wish.

Her son Thomas, she said, was standing down there before the palace, as the guard would not allow him to enter. He had been caught poaching and, as it was his second offense, he had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment. And yet he was not to blame. It lay in his blood. He *must* go hunting. His father had been that way before him. He had only shot one little chamois buck and for that he was to go to jail again. He had sworn an oath that, before he would let them lock him up, he would take his own life or else commit a murder, so that they might behead him at once; and Zenza went on to say that Walpurga would have two,—nay, three human lives on her conscience if she did not help them; that Walpurga must procure her an audience with the king or queen, so that she might, on her knees, beg them for mercy.

"Your husband and the landlord of the Chamois sent me," added Zenza, "and they both say it'll be easy enough for you to help me, and if you do, I'll be your slave as long as I live."

"Yes, I'd like to help you, but I can't see how. Things are not managed here as they are at home."

"Oh, you can find a way, quick enough. You're clever, the whole neighborhood says so; and I've known it ever so long, and said so, too, on last St. Leonard's day. Schenck, the tailor will bear me witness, and so will Spinnerwastl, too; 'Walpurga bears herself,' said I, 'as if she were one of the lowliest, but she's the first in the whole neighborhood. You'll all live to see what be-

comes of her. Her wisdom and her goodness will show themselves.' Now, Walpurga, you'll help me; won't you."

"Yes, as soon as there's a chance."

"But I can't wait. Thomas is to go to jail to-morrow, at daybreak, and, if he's not released to-day, there will be murder."

"My dear woman," interposed Mademoiselle Kramer, "his majesty the king declared a general amnesty at the birth of the crown prince. That covers your son's case, does it not?"

"No; that's the very trouble. All the courts in the country are against my Thomas. Look at this. It's all there. The innkeeper wrote it down, better than I can tell you. The writing must reach the king before noon, or it'll be too late. My son Thomas is walking up and down out there, and it's an even chance whether he goes to heaven or hell. He's got a double-barreled pistol with him, and he'll shoot the first man he looks at and himself, too, before this very palace, if I go out there without having done anything for him."

"Yes, but I can't run up to the king as I would to the innkeeper, or I'd gladly do it."

"I must sit down, my knees are breaking under me," exclaimed Zenza; and Mademoiselle Kramer hurried to bring her a chair. And while she sat there with drooping head, great tears dropped upon the bony, thick-veined hands that lay folded on her knees.

Walpurga motioned to Mademoiselle Kramer, who was trying to console the old woman. She wanted to tell her that Zenza was not so very good, after all, and that Thomas was still worse; but Mademoiselle Kramer turned about and said:

"I have an idea. Countess Wildenort's brother is aide-camp to his majesty, and, in half an hour from now, will present his report and get the countersign. Now, Walpurga, go to Countess Irma at once and request her to hand the petition to her brother, so that he may submit it to his majesty."

"Yes, yes, do go—do! Lord, what a wise angel you have here with you, Walpurga;—but go right off—don't

lose a moment! May I stay here a little while longer, or shall I wait down there before the palace?"

"No! you may remain here, my good woman," said Mademoiselle Kramer, consoling her. "But hurry yourself," said she, addressing Walpurga, who still held the letter before her, and stood there as if immovable.

Walpurga left the apartment. When she drew near to Irma's door, she heard the countess, with fervid expression, singing Schumann's song to Friedrich Rueckert's words:

He came to me,
In storm and rain,
And boldly, he
My heart hath ta'en.

Was my heart won,
Or his, that day?
Methinks both hearts
Did meet half-way.

The chambermaid announced Walpurga. Irma stopped in the middle of her song.

"Welcome! What good thought brings you here?"

Walpurga hesitated, but, at last, preferred her request and handed the paper to the countess.

"Take courage," said Irma, consolingly.

She rang for a servant, to whom she said: "Tell my brother to come here at once." Then, addressing Walpurga, she continued: "I'll add a few words of my own. Be calm. I am glad to be able to grant your request. I've often wanted to ask you whether there was not some wish that you would like to have gratified. The king will surely grant the pardon."

Walpurga would have liked to interrupt her, but everything seemed as if bewitched. Before she could say a word, the aide-de-camp had come. Irma begged him to wait while she added a few lines of her own.

The aid-de-camp had taken his leave. Irma passed her hand over Walpurga's face and said: "Let me banish all your sad thoughts. Be happy and take my word for it—the man is saved. Go to the poor woman and quiet her in the mean while. I'll bring the answer to your room."

Walpurga could not find words, or she would have said something, even then. But the petition had already gone. After all no one would be harmed in the matter, and, although Thomas really was a wicked fellow, this might make a better man of him. Walpurga left Irma's apartment. Stopping at the door, for an instant, to recover herself, she heard Irma singing again. When she reached her room, she was in a calmer state and said to Zenza:

"Your Thomas will get off; depend upon it. But you must give me your word, and promise to keep it, too, that Thomas will become an honest man, and that you won't help him sell his stolen wares and hide his evil ways. You needn't look at me so, for I've a right to talk to you this way. I've risked a great deal for you."

"Yes, indeed; you've a right to say it," replied Zenza, in a half-earnest, half-jesting tone. "You make our whole neighborhood happy. We're all proud of you. On Sunday, before the church, I'll tell them what influence you have here, and they'll all believe me. Your mother was my playfellow, and if my Thomas had got an honest woman like you for his wife, he'd been thrifty, too. He must get himself a good wife. I'll give him no peace till he does."

Zenza was enjoying some good coffee which Mademoiselle Kramer had prepared for her, and the kind-hearted housekeeper filled her cup again and again.

"If I could only give my son some of this! Oh, how he must be suffering out there! But it serves him right; that's his punishment. He's on the lookout now, but not as a poacher. It's quite a different thing, now." Zenza was quite voluble and Mademoiselle Kramer was charmed with the frankness and motherly affection of the old woman.

When Zenza had emptied her cup and eaten nearly all the cake, she said:

"May I take this little bit of sugar with me. It'll always remind me that I've drunk coffee in the king's palace."

Mademoiselle Kramer wrapped a piece of cake in a paper, and said: "Take this to your son."

It seemed as though Zenza would never get done thank-

ing them. She was in great good-humor, and asked permission to see the prince; but Walpurga refused it and well knew why; for, at home, Zenza was regarded as a witch and, even if it were mere superstition, thought Walpurga, who can know what might happen? She had already become so politic that she availed herself, as an excuse, of the doctor's order that no stranger should be allowed near the person of the crown prince.

Zenza now told them how great a commotion Walpurga's sudden departure had created in their neighborhood. Ever since, the people would talk of nothing else. The folks were all late at church on Sunday, because they had stopped before Walpurga's house and stared at it as if there was something new to be seen, and Hansei had been obliged to show his cow to half the congregation, as if there was something strange about it. But the thoughts of all were of Walpurga; and she also said that it was well known that Walpurga's influence had secured Stasi's betrothed his position as ranger. In spite of Walpurga's protestations that she knew nothing of it, Zenza insisted on her story, and praised her the more for her modesty.

The time passed quickly.

Countess Irma, her face radiant with joy, brought the king's letter of pardon.

Zenza would have fallen on her knees to her and kissed her feet, but Irma held her up and said:

"I've something more for you: take this, so that, besides being free, you may be able to get some pleasure."

She gave her a gold piece.

Old Zenza's eyes sparkled, while she said:

"If the gracious princess should ever want any one who'd go through fire and water to serve her, she need only think of Zenza and Thomas."

She would have said much more, but Walpurga said:

"Thomas is waiting for you at the gate; make haste and go to him."

"You see, dear princess, how good she is. She deserves to be happy."

"Walpurga," said Mademoiselle Kramer, "you might give the woman the money for your husband."

"I'll take it for you."

"No, I'll send it. I must wait awhile," said Walpurga hesitating. She could not well explain that she distrusted both Zenza and her son.

"Here," said Irma, handing Zenza the little golden heart which she wore; "take this to Walpurga's child, from me." Then, removing her silk kerchief, she added, "give her this, too."

"Oh, what a lovely neck!" exclaimed Zenza.

Walpurga again reminded her that she had better return to her son.

Irma felt happy to think that she had brought about the pardon. Walpurga was afraid to tell them Zenza was a stranger to her and that she almost hated her; or that Red Thomas was one of the worst men in their neighborhood. She consoled herself with the thought that all would yet be well. Bad men can grow better, or else all talk of repentance would be mere lies and deceit.

In the mean while, Zenza, holding the pardon on high, had hurried out of the palace.

"Is my reckoning settled?" asked Thomas, spitting as far as he could.

"Yes, thank God! See what a mother can do."

"I don't owe you much thanks for that, what did you bring me into the world for? But the best of it all is it's a slap in the face for the great snarling country justice. Now, mother, I'm as thirsty as three bailiff's clerks. Waiting has almost used me up. Have you anything more about you?"

"Of course I have; just look."

She showed him the gold piece, which he most dexterously removed from her hand and into his pocket.

"What else have you got?" said he, when he noticed the little gold heart that she had taken from her pocket at the same time.

"The beautiful princess gave me that and this silk kerchief for Walpurga's child."

"Hansei's child will have enough with the kerchief," said Thomas, appropriating the gold heart, while he good-naturedly allowed his mother to retain the black cord which had been attached to it.

"There, mother; that'll do very well, and now let's

take a drink for having waited so long. While I was waiting out here, I saw a splendid rifle at the gunsmith's. You can take it apart and put it in your pocket, and we'll see if the greencoats catch me again."

The first thing young Thomas did was to take the chamois beard and the black cock plume out of his pocket and stick them in his hat again. Then he put on his hat in a defiant manner, and his whole bearing seemed to say: I'd like to see who'd dare touch them.

Just as they were going away, Baum came in from the street. He seemed anxious to avoid them, but Zenza went up to him and thanked him again for the handsome present he had given her when Walpurga had been sent for. She looked at him strangely and Baum, with a side glance, noticed that Thomas's eyes were fixed upon him. He felt a shudder passing like a flash of lightning, from his heart to his head. It actually made his hair stand on end, and obliged him to raise his hat and adjust it differently; but he took a nail-file from his pocket and began trimming his nails, and then said: "You've thanked me already; once is enough."

"Mother! if Jangerl wasn't in America, I'd have sworn that was he."

"You're crazy," replied Zenza.

They went into the town together. Thomas always walking briskly in front. It seemed as if it would not worry him much, were he to lose his mother.

They repaired to an inn, where, without taking time to sit down, he drank off a schoppen of wine. Then, telling his mother to wait, he went off to purchase the rifle.

Meanwhile, Walpurga was sitting by the window and imagining how the folks at home would be talking of her great power, and how, at the Chamois, they would have so much to say about her, and that the innkeeper's wife, who had always looked down upon her, would almost burst with envy.

Walpurga laughed and was pleased to think that the envious and proud would be angry at her good fortune. This, indeed, seemed her greatest delight, and at all events, was the thought on which she dwelt longest. Another reason may have been that the joy of the virtu-

ous is more quickly exhausted than the angry and evil speeches of the wicked, which keep fermenting and sending bubbles to the surface long after they have been uttered. Walpurga remained sitting by the window, her lips silently moving, as if she were repeating to herself the words of those who envied and were angry at her, until, at last, Countess Irma addressed her:

"I can see how happy you are. Yes, Walpurga, if we could only do good to some fellow-creature every moment, we would be the happiest beings under the sun. Don't you see, Walpurga, the real divine grace of a prince lies in his being able to do good at any moment?"

"I understand that quite well," answered Walpurga. "A king is like the sun which shines down on all, and refreshes the trees near by, as well as the flowers in the distant, hidden valley; it does good to men and beast and everything. Such a king is a messenger from God; but he must be careful to remain one, for being lord over all pride and lust may overpower him. He's just given life to Thomas, and all the prison doors open as they do in the fable when they say: '*Open sesame.*' Oh, you good king! don't let them spoil you, and always have such kind-hearted people about you as my Countess Irma."

"Thanks," said Irma. "I now know you perfectly. Believe me, all the books in the world contain nothing better and nothing more than does your heart; and, although you cannot write, it has been so much the more plainly written there.—But let us be quiet and sensible. Come, you must take your writing lesson."

They sat down together, and Irma taught Walpurga how to use the pen. Walpurga said that she did not care to write single letters, and that she would prefer having a word to copy.

Irma wrote the word "pardon" for her. Walpurga filled a whole sheet with that word, and when Irma left the room, she took the writing with her, saying:

"I shall preserve this as a memento of this hour."

CHAPTER III.

“**W**HAT can be the matter with the queen?—”
—“Her majesty, added Mademoiselle Kramer.
—“What can it be? said Walpurga; “for some days, the prince—

“His royal highness,” said Mademoiselle Kramer.

—“Has hardly been noticed by her. Before that, whenever she saw the child and held it to her heart, she always seemed lifted up to the skies, and once said to me: ‘Walpurga, didn’t it make you feel as if you’d become a girl again, free and independent of everything? To me, the world is nothing but myself and my child’—and now she hardly looks at it, just as if her having had a child were a dream. There must be great trouble in a mother’s heart—”

“Royal mother,” said Mademoiselle Kramer.

—“When she doesn’t care to look at her child.”

The queen’s heart was, in truth, torn by a mighty struggle.

Her feelings had, for months past, been of a most distressing and excited nature. There was one point on which she dared not even think aloud, and which she would have thought profaned by speaking of it to others. It was her wish to determine for herself, and she had done so. Ever since she had become a mother, she had felt as if separated from the rest of the world. When she thought of her child and, above all, when she clasped it to her heart, she felt as if nothing more remained to be done. She and the child were her world; all else was as nothing. And yet she loved the king with all her heart, and ardently desired that their union should might be so complete that they be one in feeling, in belief, and in affection.

The thought that they ought to be united in all things, constantly grew upon her. Father, mother and child

should be as one, praying to the same God, with the same thoughts, and in the same words.

The isolation of the sick chamber only helped to strengthen these thoughts, and, now that she was about to return to the world, she longed to make the bond that united her to the king perfect in the highest sense.

She was allowed to do but little talking, and, therefore, did not indulge in conversation. After a few days had passed, she had a Madonna, by Filippo Lippi the younger, brought to her dimly lighted chamber. She gazed at the picture for hours, and it seemed to be looking at her in return—the two mothers were one in bliss.

The canon visited her and found her in this devotional frame of mind. With trembling lips, she confided to him her desire to belong to the church of her husband and child. He lent a ready assent to the request that she might be spared all dogmatic teachings. When the canon had left, she became oppressed with a sense of fear. There goes a man, thought she, who bears my secret with him. He had promised to keep it to himself and thus prove himself worthy her confidence. But the secret had, nevertheless, ceased to be entirely her own.

She soon quieted her fears, and a glow of delight overspread her features at the thought that, although she was now a mother, there was yet another sublime and exalted function which would perfect her union with her husband and furnish one more proof of her great love for him.

In the fullness of life, the thought of death occurred to her, and she ordered another painting to be placed on the easel before her. It was the *Maria Ægyptica*, by Ribera.

The queen often felt as if she must seek the glance of the penitent. But those eyes, instead of beholding aught, seem as if listening: not in alarm, for an angel is calling to her—but submissive and trustful, for she is used to the sound of heavenly voices. Instead of representing the penitent daughter of the king as crushed and bruised from having mortified the flesh, the artist has made her features expressive of restored, childlike innocence and youthful beauty—a nude figure, divested of all raiment, wrapped in the long, fair tresses that descend to her

knees. She is kneeling beside the open grave that is to receive her. Her blue eyes gaze into eternity; her lips are closed, as if in pain, and above her hovers an angel who spreads the mantle of mercy over her and exclaims: "Thou art forgiven!" Forgiven and redeemed, she sinks into the grave.

The ascetic tone of the picture fully accorded with the queen's mood, and the canon often found her lost in ecstatic admiration of it.

Although Doctor Gunther disapproved of this mute companionship, his wishes and his orders were alike unavailing. It was the first time that this man, who was so highly esteemed by the queen, had encountered obstinacy and unyielding defiance at her hands. When Irma saw the picture, she carelessly remarked that the position of the eyes was faulty, but that the artist had skillfully availed himself of this fault in order to produce a peculiar expression. The queen pressed her hand to her heart—she was alone in her feelings and wished to remain so.

Walpurga was successful where both Gunther and Irma had failed.

"Is that a forest-sprite?" asked she.

"What's that?"

"Out our way, they tell of the forest-sprites. They haunt the mountains on ghost-nights, and can wrap themselves in their long hair."

The queen related the legend of Maria Ægyptica to Walpurga. She was a princess who had led a dissolute life. Suddenly, she left the palace and, renouncing all pleasures, went out into the desert, where she supported herself on roots and lived many years, until all her clothes fell from her body: and, when her dying hour arrived, an angel descended from above and spread the mantle of mercy over her—

"That's all very good and pretty," said Walpurga, "but, no offense to you, my queen, it seems a sin to have such a terrible picture before one's eyes. I wouldn't want to sleep in the same room with it. It seems as if some night it would come down and drag me into the open grave with it. Oh, dear Lord! I'm afraid of it. even in broad daylight."

Walpurga's words were not without effect. When night came, the queen really imagined that the picture was coming toward her. She could not sleep, and was obliged to have it removed during the night.

Her calmness and equanimity were thus restored, and, as reading was now permitted her, the priest provided her with suitable books.

Her whole life was possessed by the one idea. Walpurga had observed correctly. The queen scarcely looked at her child, although the step she contemplated taking was prompted by love for her husband and her child.

A few days before she went out for the first time, she sent for the king, and said:

"Kurt, next Sunday will be the first time that I go out, and the first day that I enter your church, and that of our son. Henceforth, I shall pray at the same altar with you and him."

"I don't understand you—"

"I have vowed that if God, in his mercy, would preserve my life and that of the child, I would be united with you in all things. I am not fulfilling an enforced vow, but a free and well-considered resolution. I offer this, not as a new proof, but rather as a confirmation or final sealing of our love. Kurt, my every thought, all that I am, is yours. We are as one before the world; let us be as one before God. Henceforth, we will not take separate ways, or have separate thoughts. Let our child learn nothing of the differences between men, and, above all, between those to whom he owes his life. I feel happy that I can do this as a free offering and not as a sacrifice."

"Mathilde," said the king, with a strangely cold tone, "is this the first time you speak of this, or have you already made preparations—"

"My resolution was formed in secret, and in all earnestness. Afterward, I announced it and all is now in readiness. I had intended it as a surprise for you. The canon almost insisted that I must tell you of it in his presence, but I wouldn't consent."

"Thank God!" said the king, drawing a long breath, "all may again be well!"

"'Again?' 'Well?'" inquired the queen in amazement,

The king calmly explained to her that, although he deprecated the sacrifice, he could not accept it. The queen deprecated his terming it a sacrifice, and the king said:

"Very well, then; you need go no further than myself, who of all beings am most in accord with you, to discover that others may—nay, must—judge of your actions differently from yourself. What will the world, the courts, our subjects, think of it?"

"What need we care about that, when we know that we are right? 'What will the world say?' is always the great question. But the world must not force us to be different from what we are."

"Mathilde, you speak like a martyr. Your feelings are exalted and worthy of all reverence. You are both good and noble; but, believe me, the best actions, indeed, the only proper ones, are those which require neither explanations nor apology. We are not hermits. Although your motives are pure and lofty, the world will be unable and unwilling to understand them. Nor dare we make explanations. A prince degrades himself by stooping to explain his actions. You regard the world with heavenly feelings; but the heaven lies in your way of looking at things, not in the world itself. I should be sorry to reveal the world's wickedness to you, and thus cast a gloom over your kindly views of life. Hold fast to your belief in the Highest, but do it after the forms of your own faith."

"And must I, all my life, walk in one path, while you and the child take another?"

"Mathilde, we are not anchorites; we are not even private citizens. Our position is an exposed one. A sovereign can have no private actions—"

"Do you mean that all we do is to be as an example to others?"

"I mean that, too," said the king, hesitating; "but what I meant to say was, that, in whatever you do, it is not yourself alone, but the queen who acts. Its effects are felt far and near. I am happy to be the object of so much love. You feel it, do you not, Mathilde?"

"Don't speak of it. Our best and deepest feelings do not seek expression in words."

"Bear this well in mind—the wife of a private gentleman can perform such an action in secret. You cannot. You would be obliged to close the Protestant court chapel, and would thus offend all throughout the land who hold your present faith."

"I don't wish to offend any one. The world can't ask me to make such a sacrifice. My highest, my only aim, is to be one with you, on earth and in heaven, now and hereafter."

"Very well, then; promise me one thing."

"Whatever you wish."

"Promise me that you will defer acting on your resolve, for at least a month. It would be wrong to allow a passing mood to change the course of one's life."

"You're a noble creature," said the queen; "I'll obey you."

"So you give up your resolve?"

"No, I shall wait. I don't wish it to be what you imagine it—the outgrowth of a sickly mood, engendered by the seclusion of my chamber. I'll allow it to ripen in the sunlight, and you will then discover that it is something more than a mere mood."

The king was satisfied with the result. But, strangely enough, he refrained from any display of affection, and when, at parting, he took the queen's hand in his, his manner seemed cold and distant.

CHAPTER IV.

THE king had shown great self-command while conversing with his wife, and, now that he was alone, felt that her words had aroused a dormant feeling of displeasure.

He sincerely loved his wife, but he was of an heroic, active temperament, and all that savored of pettiness, self-questioning or sentimentality, was utterly distasteful to him. His great ambition was to promote the happiness of his subjects, and to achieve for himself a place in history. But a period of peaceful development, in which all were friendly to the government and anxious to serve it, afforded no opportunity for heroic deeds, or for new and startling measures. All that could be done was to hold fast to what had already been achieved and, at the same time, to encourage new growths. But such labors absorb the work of many whose names remain unknown to fame, and it was this that explained the king's fondness for building. The construction of great edifices devoted to art, science, the church and the army, could not but be regarded as proofs of a mind anxious to achieve great deeds.

The king loved his wife, and was content to have it so. The queen, on the other hand, was ever anxious to furnish new proofs of her love, and her deep sensibility was again displayed in this attempt to carry out a resolve which, although prompted by the best motives, was utterly impracticable. She idealized everything, and, in that respect, the king's temperament was the very opposite of hers. Her apartments were always so dimly lighted that, when he entered them, he was obliged to grope his way. On emerging from this gloom, it seemed to him as if the morn had dawned anew, for he dearly loved the bright light of day. This continual worrying about religious problems that none can solve—this constant mental excitement, incapacitates one for prompt action. He who

desires to have his life-fabric rest on a firm foundation, must be free from over-refined self-criticism. He must subordinate all his feelings, all his passions, to the one aim, and to no one does this so forcibly apply as to the monarch who desires to direct the diversified and all-embracing interests of his subjects.

The queen's aim was to realize, in her own person, her ideal of the wife and the mother; but then she had no right to forget that she was a queen. Something more was required than eternal trifling and weaving of garlands, ingeniously devised as they might be. Love, such as hers, is exacting withal, for, while it lavishes endearments, it constantly requires a return in kind. It is exclusive and, at the same time, wearisome. The sun shines and love exists, but why constantly worry about either.

The lonely life the queen had been leading had produced an excited condition that sought vent in the attempt to change her faith, and, although the king had determined that it should be nothing more than an attempt, her words had tended to confirm a corresponding feeling of loneliness on his part—a result to which his recent experience had in no slight degree contributed.

The king was alone in his cabinet. How would it have stood with him, if his wife had possessed a great and commanding mind? The thought had suddenly flashed upon him. He passed his hand across his brow, as if to banish the idea; he dared not, could not think of such a thing. He sent for Doctor Gunther, for this affair must be disposed of at once.

Gunther came.

The king, at first, cautiously sounded him, in order to discover whether this confidant of the queen's knew aught of what had happened, and then, under the seal of secrecy, informed him of all.

To the king's great surprise, Gunther, instead of thanking him for this mark of confidence, politely said:

"I should much prefer that Your Majesty had graciously permitted me to remain ignorant of secrets and troubles in which I can be of no assistance."

The king stared at him in astonishment. This man was always obstinate and preserved his dignity.

"I was about to ask you," said the king, harshly, "whether you believe that you can influence the queen in this matter."

"I fear not; but if Your Majesty desires it, I am ready to make the effort."

"Pray do."

"But I fear her majesty will be offended. I understand her idiosyncrasies. If the matter is noised about, she will think it profaned by the touch of others, and it will thus, in her opinion, lose its greatest charm."

"That would be the very thing," said the king, eagerly. "Perhaps that will be the best way to cure her of her enthusiasm. Everything is considered a fit subject for debate, nowadays. Your friends in the chamber of delegates debate everything, and they might as well—"

It was a constant source of annoyance to the king, that the doctor, who never obtruded his opinions, would, when drawn into an argument on questions of religion or politics, always espouse the liberal side; but, with all that, he could ill afford to do without Gunther. Although the king found him objectionable in some respects, he nevertheless had a high regard for him. He held so high a position in the world of science and in the esteem of his countrymen, that the presence, near the king, of one possessed of such liberal views, reflected peculiar glory on the court itself.

The king now formally requested Gunther to endeavor to move the queen from her resolve.

It was a difficult undertaking.

The queen had, heretofore, made this trusted friend her confidant, and now he was possessed of a secret of hers that had been given him by another. Gunther endeavored to draw the queen into some allusion to her secret resolve, but, failing in the attempt, was obliged to introduce the subject himself.

The queen seemed surprised and grieved.

"Why has the king done this?" asked she, her features expressing intense pain.

"Perhaps his majesty," replied Gunther, "credits me with the possession of more powerful arguments than any which have yet been advanced."

"I know them, all," answered the queen, excitedly; "in such a matter, no stranger should dare to breathe a word of—"

"Then, Your Majesty, I've nothing more to say, and humbly beg leave to withdraw."

"No, no! Speak on—I must hear you."

"Must? You must not."

"Wish, or must, it's all the same. You're always saying that there's no such thing as free will, and with monarchs it is certainly so."

"Your Majesty," said Gunther, in a gentle voice, "the high resolve you have formed was not an act of your will. It is the natural and inevitable consequence of a chain of events and impressions, which have been shaped by your temperament. Fervent natures are always afraid lest they cannot do enough for themselves and for the world. They would like, with every hour—nay, with every breath—to make others happy, or impress the world with some great thought."

"So you, too, can flatter."

"I never flatter. I simply take the diagnosis which, in your case, is not flattering. This excess of sensibility is not health—"

"So you consider my mood as unhealthy—"

"We should not use that term.—But I entreat you, Your Majesty! this tone, with either of us, is hardly—"

"Speak on. I like to hear you. I don't feel hurt that you know of this. I regard you as part of the daylight that was to ripen my resolve."

"Well then, all that is to ripen must needs be subjected to currents of air and even to storms. But I shall bring you no storm, and shall not even speak of the fact that whoever deserts the faith into which he was born, insults his parents; nor shall I tell you that the ceremonies to which we have been accustomed from youth, are the soul's mother-tongue. All that does not address itself to the mind. Mind and reason are the parents of conscious man. It is our duty to live up to our convictions, and I can, therefore, find no fault with a change of religion based upon conviction. But it seems to me, Your Majesty, that your change of faith is simply superficial or,

if it be deeper, only from love for your husband. You know, however, that I view all these things from an entirely different standpoint. I believe I know the spring in paradise, whence flows the stream that on earth is divided into so many little rivulets; and these again, to use the words of my friend Eberhard, Countess Irma's father, furnish the power for the mills that grind out sermons. Your Majesty knows that the legend of the four streams that flowed from the tree Igdrasil, which is found in the most beautiful of all books, the Bible, is also to be found in our old German Saga."

"Very well—but I beg of you, my dear friend, spare me your literary curiosities."

"Your Majesty," resumed Gunther, "as long as we remain in the faith of our fathers, we can enjoy great latitude of opinion. Our thoughts can reach far beyond its confines, and no inquisition has power over us: but, as soon as we profess another religion, we forfeit the right to be free. It is our duty to live up to it. One who is noble by birth can afford to admit civil equality, but he who has had nobility conferred on him, cannot do so. Will Your Majesty permit me to say one word more? I regard it as fortunate for mankind in general, and our German fatherland in particular, that there is a diversity of religious beliefs. That of itself tends to preserve feelings of humanity, for thus we cannot help seeing that there are different forms of soul utterances for one and the same thing. A multiplicity of sects affords the best protection against fanaticism and, moreover, helps to prove that religious forms are of no consequence; that is, one can be righteous in any faith and, indeed, without any outward show of religion."

Gunther remained with the queen for a long while, offering further explanations of the ideas he had advanced.

He was still with her, when the canon was announced.

The queen sent word that she desired to be excused, and requested him to come the next day.

When Gunther left, she was still as firm in her resolve as at first. She felt persuaded that this was an action in which no other being should interfere, and, least of all, a man.

She was on the point of taking Irma into her confidence. She felt that the countess was clever and, moreover, a true friend. Unconquerable dread held her back. She feared lest she might appear weak and vacillating in Irma's eyes.

CHAPTER V.

FOR days, the queen remained alone. Walpurga and the child were the only ones permitted near her. She did not wish to speak to any one else, be it her husband, Gunther, or the priest.

One afternoon, when Walpurga was with her, she felt impelled to ask:

"Walpurga, do you know that I don't belong to your faith?"

"Yes, indeed, I do; and I'm glad of it."

"Glad of it?"

"Of course I am; you're the first and only Lutheran I've ever known, and if they're all like you, it must be a beautiful religion."

"It is beautiful, and so are all religions that make good beings of us."

"Why, do you know, queen, that's the very thing my father used to say, and in the very same words? Oh, if he'd only lived long enough to have had a talk with you."

The queen was silent for a long while.

At last she asked:

"Walpurga, if your religion was different from Hansei's, would you go to his church?"

"Why, Hansei's Catholic, as well as I am."

"But if it were otherwise?"

"But it isn't otherwise."

"But just imagine it were."

"But I can't do that," said she, as if about to cry.

The queen was again silent for some time. Presently Walpurga, of her own accord, said:

"Yes, I can, after all. I've thought it out. Why, you're Lutheran and your husband's Catholic. But why do you ask me that?"

"Imagine yourself in my position. If you were a Protestant, would you not visit your husband's church?"

"No, queen, never! As long as I'd been an honest wife while a Protestant, I'd remain one. May I tell you a little story, queen?"

"Yes; go on."

"What was I going to say?—Yes, now I know.—You see, my dear father—the king's physician has surely told you what a good man he was—But I'm beginning at the wrong end; I wanted to tell it to you differently.—Well, as I was going to say, I went to school to a very strict priest who condemned all people that didn't belong to our faith, to the lowest depths of hell. I was once telling my father about it, when he said: 'Purgei,'—he always called me Purgei when he wanted to speak right to my heart—'Purgei,' said he, 'there are many millions of people in the world, and the smallest portion of them are Christians, and what a vile God it would be who would condemn all the rest to hell just because they aren't Christians, when they can't help it, and were born as they are. Don't you believe,' said he, 'that a man's damned for his faith, as long as he's virtuous.' Well, I hold fast by that. Of course, I didn't say anything to the priest about it, for he needn't know everything. I'm sure he don't tell me all he knows."

The queen was silent, and Walpurga soon began again:

"And now I think of something, better than all. Oh, my dear queen, I must tell you this, too. It's about my father, who used to think a great deal. The old doctor, the father of the one who's living there now, often used to say that if father had studied he'd have become a great man. Well, one evening, on the very Sunday that I was confirmed, I was sitting with father and mother on the bench behind our little cottage by the lake. The evening bells were tolling; we had said our aves and were sitting about in front of the cottage, when we heard the Liederkranz. They were coming across the lake in a boat, and were singing so beautifully—I can't tell you how lovely their singing was. And then father got up from his seat, his face glowing in the sunshine, and said: 'Now I know how our Lord in heaven must feel.' "Don't blaspheme," said my mother. "I'm not blaspheming; quite the reverse," said father. His voice seemed won-

drous strange. 'Yes, I know it, I feel it,' said he; 'all churches—our own, the Protestant, the Jewish, the Turkish, and whatever their names may be—every one of them has a part in the song, and though each sings as best he can, they go together very well, and make a chorus that must sound glorious up there in heaven. Let every one sing according to the voice God has given him, for He will know how it will harmonize, and it surely does harmonize beautifully.'"

Walpurga's beaming glance met that of the queen.

"Your father spoke wisely," said the queen; a tear glistened in her eye and in that of the nurse, too.

Walpurga went away, taking the child with her.

The next day the queen sent for the king, and said:

"Kurt, I have courage."

"I know it."

"No. I have a courage that you do not know."

"A courage that I do not know?"

"And never will know. I have courage enough to appear weak and vacillating; but, Kurt, you will not misjudge me on that account?"

"Pray speak more plainly, and with fewer preliminaries."

"I am determined," continued the queen, "I hardly dare utter that word, now—but you will not misjudge me? I shall remain in the faith in which I was born, and we shall nevertheless be as one."

The king thanked her quite cordially, and only regretted that the canon knew of the matter. He hoped, however, to be able to silence his tongue.

The queen was surprised to find that he manifested so little joy; but, on second thought, this seemed quite natural to her, for why should that which had been nothing more than a passing cloud, leave great results in its wake? Others could know nothing of the bitter struggle it had cost her.

She felt sensible that it would be a long while before any expression or resolve of hers would obtain weight or authority, for it would not soon be forgotten that she had once shown herself weak.

While she was in the Protestant court chapel, on the

following Sunday, she scarcely ventured to raise her eyes. She was thinking of how it would have been if she now were in the other church, and of how the eyes of the congregation would have been directed to the pew that was thenceforward to remain vacant. In spirit, she had already deserted this church and its congregation. Her soul trembled when she thought of the resolve she had entertained, and, from the bottom of her heart, she thanked her husband, whose strong arm had held her back.

When the whole congregation arose and, in the prayers for the royal household, offered up thanks for her preservation and that of the royal prince, she could no longer restrain her tears.

Contrary to her usual habit, she went to church again that afternoon.

Meanwhile, the king and Countess Irma were pleasantly sauntering in that portion of the park from which the public was shut out.

The king informed Irma of the queen's resolve and of how she had been induced to give it up. Irma replied that she had, long since, surmised as much, but had not felt that she had a right to speak of it. She had dropped a hint to Doctor Gunther, who had refused to have anything to do with the matter.

The king expressed his dislike for Gunther, but Irma defended him with great enthusiasm.

"The doctor is very fortunate," said the king, "to have so eloquent an advocate in his absence."

"I am that to all friends whom I truly respect."

"I could wish that I, too, were accused," continued the king.

"And I believe," replied Irma, smiling, "Your Majesty could not wish for a more earnest advocate than I would be."

A pause ensued. The king gracefully and frankly retracted his complaints against Gunther, and this conversation seemed merely a bridge over which they passed to another topic.

The king spoke of the queen and of her peculiar temperament.

It was the first time that the king and Irma had spoken

of the queen. That the king not only prompted, but actually called forth her remarks, was the cause, at a later day, of incalculable suffering.

They extolled the poetic sense, the fervent feeling, the flower-like tenderness of the queen, and while they thus depicted her in glowing colors, they, in their own minds, found fault with her weakness and overflowing enthusiasm.

When a husband thus speaks of his wife, to a third person, it inevitably leads to estrangement and exposure.

Thus far, all was veiled in terms of praise. It was here just as it was with the queen in church. With all the power of her will, she strove to forget herself in her prayer, and to be again as she had once been; and yet, while the sense of the words she uttered entered her soul, she could not help being aware of a secret numbness and estrangement that seemed to say to her: "You will never again be as you once were."

While the king and Irma were thus conversing, they appeared to each other as equals. Their views of life were in accord, and while they spoke of how easily one might yield to temptation, their intimacy seemed to them a proof of strength rather than of weakness. They went on in perfect step with each other, and Irma no longer said: "Let us return."

The queen, since she had again appeared in society, was, if possible, more gracious and amiable than she had ever been. She placed every one far above her. They had none of them been as weak and vacillating as she. She felt it her duty to do good to every one, because, although she was no better than they, she was placed far above them. Her soul was all humility.

A few days later, the newspapers mysteriously hinted that attempts had been made to take advantage of the angelic purity of the queen, in order to estrange her from herself and alienate the affections of the people from her.

This, it was readily understood, alluded to the queen's contemplated change of faith.

The queen had always openly acknowledged herself on the side of the liberal opposition, and the king regarded Gunther as the mediator who had procured her the good-

will of the press, and who, in doing so, had not feared committing an indiscretion.

This plain and flagrant perversion of the truth only served the more to embitter him against the press and the machinations of the queen's party at court. Nevertheless, he dissembled his resentment, for he felt that he could well afford to bide his time.

CHAPTER VI.

(IRMA TO HER FRIEND EMMA.)

“**L**ET me tell you all that I did yesterday. I wanted to read—I saw the letters but could not read a word, for they all seemed to be moving about the page, like so many ants in an anthill. I wanted to sing, but no song was to my liking. I wanted to play, but even Beethoven seemed strange, and I lay for hours, dreaming. I followed the little mother and her son beyond the mountain. The larks sang my thoughts to them. They reach their home, and the wild, daring lad is tractable once more. He carols his merry song to his beloved. I fancy I hear him. Ah, Emma! what is there so glorious as making others happy? It is hard enough to be a human being, fettered by a thousand trammels, by ailments, consideration for others, and all sorts of misery; but to suffer want beside! The very idea of jails is a disgrace to humanity. Ah, Emma! how noble, how like a revelation from the great heart of the people, were the words of the simple-minded wife of the wood-cutter. I tried to put what she had said into verse, intending to give it to the king the next morning; but I could not do it; nothing satisfied me. Language is worn out, narrow, coarse. I was ever thinking of Schiller's words: ‘When the soul speaks, it has ceased to be the soul. I left my scribbling. I passed a restless night. When the soul's depths are stirred, it wanders about like a spirit, and can find no rest in sleep.

“While at breakfast this morning, I informed the king of what Walpurga had said. I was annoyed to find that he did not understand more than half of it. How else could he have answered me: ‘Yes, the Highlanders have great affection for their rulers. Pray tell that to your father.’

"The king observed that he had made a mistake, but, adroit and amiable as he is, quickly recovered his good nature and said: 'Dear Countess, I will give you a secret title, which is to be known only by us two. I appoint you as spy on the popular heart. Seek and listen, and whenever you find anything, you can always count upon unquestioning compliance on my part. Does it not seem to you that Egeria was nothing more than a spy on the popular heart? At the altar in the temple, she could overhear the secret thoughts of the people, and then repeated them to king Numa, whom they deified and adored.'

"'But our people only use prescribed prayers,' said I.

"'The thought is quite suggestive,' replied the king, and when Schnabelsdorf entered shortly afterward, he commissioned him to make brief notes of what fixed prayers the Grecians and Romans used in their temples.

"And thus the whole story ended. What I had imagined would create a deep impression, merely served to furnish amusement for an evening.

"Ah, dear Emma, *amusement* is the point about which all revolves. If an apostle were to appear to-day, he could not help preaching, 'Ask not, how shall we amuse ourselves to-day, but'—etc., etc.,—finish the sentence for yourself.

"I am no better than the rest of them. I, too, am nothing but a puppet, wound up to run seventy years, and to dance and laugh and ride and amuse itself in the mean while. All of us are mere singing-birds; the only difference being that some are contented with grain and caterpillars and flies, while others require larger morsels, such as rabbits, bucks, deer, pheasants, fish. And the higher education of that variety of singing-birds known as man, lies in the fact that he cooks his food. There is terrible vacuity in many men. *To make conversation.* Therein lies the whole art. Try to get a clear notion of the expression: *to make conversation*, and you will find how nonsensical it is. The people find me entertaining, but I don't *make* conversation. I merely speak when I have somewhat to say.

"My evil spirit is constantly shouting the word '*dilet-tante*' in my ear.

“ ‘Dilettante—One who junkets or feeds on tit-bits for pastime,’—says my dictionary. Rather rough, but there is something in it.”

“*One day later.*

“The king has just sent me the following poem. I must apologize to him; he seems to have understood my communication far better than I had suspected. What do you think of the lines? Why should a king not write verses? Ideality is required of him. Indeed a king should understand all things, but be a dilettante in none.

“P. S.—I have just looked at the lines again, and find that I cannot copy them for you.”

“*A day later.*

“Don’t laugh at my continually telling you of Walpurga.

“It was during our writing-lesson to-day, that the king found me with her. He told me how much pleasure it had afforded him to be able to pardon her relative.

“ ‘Our relationship is very distant,’ said she, ‘nothing more than forty-second cousins; and, Your Majesty, I’ve something on my mind. If Red Thomas turns out badly, I can’t help it.’

“The king laughed and replied: ‘Nor can I.’ It is hard to understand how Walpurga never speaks of Zenza and her son except in anger, and that she will have nothing to do with them. Strange demons jostle each other in the hearts of the people. I fear that my office of spy on the popular heart will prove very difficult.

“By the king’s orders, I have been furnished with a copy of the church prayers of the Greeks and Romans.

“I must write it down and then the idea will cease tormenting me. I am constantly picturing to myself, how would it have been if Zenza had become first lady of the bedchamber, and her son, the poacher, master of the hounds. She would be ready enough of speech. She has exceedingly clever and cunning eyes, and the lad would surely have been an elegant cavalier.

“In spite of all their prating about human equality and pride of birth, I cannot help regarding it as a sign of divine grace, that I was born a countess, instead of Zenza’s daughter; but there are two sides to that question.

"God's creatures are not so badly off in this world, after all. The frog croaking in the marsh is just as happy as the nightingale that sings on the tree.

"To say to the frog, 'Thou, too, should'st dwell in the rosebush and sing like the nightingale,' were not humane, but simply tyrannical.

"Have you ever patiently listened to the croaking of the frogs? How expressive it is of comfort! While I write, they are having a grand concert over in the park pond. I enjoy listening to them. We human beings are impudent enough to judge everything by the standard of our own taste, and yet Mistress Frog will, very justly, find no music so sweet to her ears as the song of Master Frog.

"I feel so grateful, dear Emma, that I can write everything to you. You cannot imagine what a relief it is to me.

"I am a spy on my own heart; there are many wild spirits in it—adventurers and fortune-hunters and, with them all, a nun. I am quite curious to know how so mixed a company will get on together.

"My behavior toward the whole court is so free and independent, because I have a secret daily task: writing to you.

"But my thoughts go out to you a thousand times oftener:

There's not an hour in the silent night,
But what my thoughts go out to thee.

"Do you remember it? It was your favorite song. I sing it, for your sake, at least once every day. You and my piano are all in all to me. You patiently await my coming. All the music of all the masters that ever were, or ever will be, dwells within you, and you only await the coming of the one whose touch can release those tones.

"I have a dual soul. In its one phase, the piano—in its other, the zither. The one is easily moved from place to place; the other not. The one requires that the fingers touch the strings. But ah, dear Emma, I scarce know what I am writing. I wish I could get rid of the habit of thinking. I wish I were Zenza's daughter and the poacher were my brother. But no; our thieves and rogues

who have been at school long enough to know the seven cardinal sins and the whole of the catechism by heart, are timid and cowardly; they drop the petition for pardon into their mother's lap, while they stand by whining: Forgive us, we have done nothing wrong. All the world over, there is no longer genuine scorn of nature. Methinks the 'Italian robber behind the rock' that you once worked in wools, has, in these days, ceased to be more than a traditional pattern for embroidery. The arts simply serve to gloss over life.

"Good-night—good-night."

"A day later."

"I never read what I have once written. I do not care to be reminded of it again. Yesterday's sun does not shine to-day.—But that was not what I meant. The sun is the same, but the light is ever new, and I am happy to-day and do not care for all the churches and palaces, men and women, frogs and crocodiles in the world.

"To-day, the king said to me:

"'I am well aware, Countess, that you have thought contemptuously of me, during the last two days. Every withdrawal of your sympathy affects me as sensibly as if it were an electric shock. Do not let this happen again, I beg of you!' and while he spoke, he looked at me like a beseeching child. Ah, he has such deep, beautiful eyes!

"I remember your once saying to me: 'There are glances without a background, void of depth or soul'; but the glances of this friend have unfathomed depths.

"The bonds that held me captive shall no longer restrain me! I—I—but no—I cannot write the word.

"Oh, Emma! How I wish I were a peasant on a lonely mountain height. Last night, it seemed to me as if my native mountains were calling out to me, 'Come home'—'Do come'—'It is good to be with us.' Ah, I would like to come, but cannot.

"Walpurga is a great friend to me at present. I become absorbed in her life, so full of true, natural repose. I find it excessively amusing to behold the court as reflected through her eyes. It seems like a very puppet-play, and we, like two merry children at a raree-show.

"We often sing together, and I have learned some lovely

songs from her. Oh, how charmingly independent the country people are.

“‘On mountain heights there dwells no sin.’ The song is ever haunting me.

“The king departs for the baths to-day: my brother is in his suite. The king requested me to write to him, now and then. I shall not do it.”

“*Two days later.*

“The king knows that I cannot live unless there be flowers in my room, and has given orders to have a fresh bouquet placed there every day. This displeases me. A flower that a friend has stooped to pluck for you is worth more than a thousand artistically arranged bouquets.

“The king has also left orders that bouquets shall be sent daily to Baroness N—— and Countess A——. I think this is only to avoid remarks upon the attentions shown me. I am angry at the king. He shall not have a line from me.

“I have for some time past been taking lessons in modeling, from a professor at the academy. He has finished a bust of me, and has used it as a model for a figure of Victory, to be placed on the new arsenal. Have I not reason to be proud? After this, I shall ever be in the open air, and shall see nothing but the blue sky, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and, at noon, the guard-mounting.

“The professor says that I have talent for modeling. This has made me quite happy. Painting and drawing are only half the battle—mere makeshifts. Will you permit me, on my return, to make a *relievo* of you?

“Did I not, in one of my letters to you, speak of a secret in regard to the queen?

“I think I did.

“The affair is now at an end. For love of the king, the queen wished to enter our church, or rather yours—pardon me, once and for all time, I have no church. The king behaved nobly in the matter. I shall never forget the time he told me of it. He is, indeed, a great man. How glorious it is, that there are princes on earth who realize our ideal of the perfect man. Free and yet self-possessed, unspoiled, unpervverted and unbiased. If there were no kings, we could no longer know a free,

beautiful, perfect man. I use the word *beautiful* in its highest sense, and of course presuppose the existence of a noble mind. All are not gods who suffer themselves to be worshiped.

"The poet and the king are, of all men, alone perfect. All others—be they musicians or painters, sculptors or architects, artists or scholars—have narrow, contracted vocations, solo instruments, as it were. The poet and the king are the only ones who grasp life in all its phases. To them, naught is devoid of meaning, because all belongs to them. The poet creates a world; the king is a world in himself. The poet knows and depicts the shepherd and the huntsman, the king and the waiting-maid, the seamstress—in fact, all. But the king is hunter and statesman, soldier and farmer, scholar and artist, all in himself. He represents the orchestra of talents. Thus is he king, and thus does he represent a people, an age—aye, humanity itself, and at its best.

"Ah, Emma! Call me Turandot. Schoning, the poetic chamberlain, is also paying his addresses to me.

"Do you know what I ought to have been?

"I do.

"Queen of a tribe of savages. That is what I was created for. My true vocation would be to found a new civilization. Don't laugh at me. I am not joking; indeed, I'm not. I am fit for something far better than all I have here. I am not modest. I judge others and myself, too. I know my merits and my faults, also.

"On father's estate, there is a hammock that hangs between two elms. My greatest pleasure was to lie in it, suspended in the air, while I dreamt of distant woods.

"Do you know some savage tribe that would elect me as its queen? I have procured some of the Indian melodies, if they really deserve the name. One of the professors at the university, who spent six years among the Indians, recently gave a lecture at court. He brought some of their instruments with him, and had them played on. There was more noise than music. It seemed like the lisping of a nation which, as regards civilization, is yet in its infancy."

“Four o'clock in the morning.

“Forget all that I have written to you, as you would the breezes and the weather-changes of yesterday.

“I have just left my bed, in order to write to you. I cannot sleep. I am scarcely dressed while I sit here speaking to you. Oh, that I *could* speak to you! Writing is a miserable makeshift—nay, helplessness itself.

“I don't know what ails me. All that I am—my very self—seems as if only for the time being. I feel as if waiting for something, I know not what. I fancy that the very next moment must bring it, and that I shall either be doing some wonderful thing, or have it happen to me—that I shall be completely changed and become a great healing power, instead of the puny, useless child of man that I now am. I listen and fancy that I must hear a tone that has never yet been uttered on earth.

“There is no use trying—I cannot write. I imagined that it would soothe me if I could force myself to think and speak of all things in definite terms, but I know nothing definite. I only know that I am unhappy. Not unhappy, but as if dead and yet alive. I imagine myself a sleep-walker.

“I can write no more. I close my letter and shall go to bed. I want to sleep. All the world about me lies hushed in slumber. Oh, that I could dream myself into another world, even though my sleep were one from which there is no waking!

“Good-night! Good-morning!

IRMA.”

CHAPTER VII.

"TO-MORROW, I mean to bring Countess Irma to you," said Doctor Gunther to his wife, one evening. "She's the daughter of my old friend."

"In voice and manner, the countess is full of majesty, but her singing is not practical."

"Then you shall teach her. She will be glad to learn from you."

"If she be willing, I am quite at her service."

The doctor was delighted to find it so easy to bring the two ladies together. He knew, of course, that his wife complied with his every wish, but in this instance he was doubly anxious that all should go smoothly.

For some time past, he had observed that Irma was in a feverish condition which, during the last few days, had been growing worse; but he was one of those physicians who pay great attention to mental conditions and, instead of waiting for disease to make its appearance, endeavor to avert it by proper changes in the mode of living. He did not know the cause of Irma's excitement, but he knew that her temperament was one of extremes, and felt sure that if she could only obtain an insight into a pure home and, perhaps, become initiated into its ways, it would have a tranquilizing effect and lead her mind to move in quieter channels. He had enough experience to know that there are no substitutes for sympathy and friendship, but felt that the acquaintance of a citizen's wife, of exalted character and ripe culture, could not fail to have an effect upon Irma, who had thus far known no life but that of the cloister and the court.

Gunther had no need to give his wife instructions, or even a mere hint as to the way in which she was to endeavor to gain an influence over Irma. He felt as sure of his wife's course in the matter as if she were a force in nature, and well knew that, if left to her own methods, the result would be so much the more certain.

Gunther usually kept his household free from all relations with the court; but this was the daughter of his friend—although that friend was angry at him—and he allowed her the freedom of his house.

Some weeks before, when speaking of the *Te Deum* on the occasion of the birth of the crown prince, Irma had casually referred to her having met Gunther's wife and youngest daughter. The doctor had again, as if by the merest chance, introduced the subject, and, almost without knowing it, Irma had expressed a wish to improve the slight acquaintance thus begun. This was just what he wished for, and, on the afternoon of the day following, he conducted Irma to his beautiful, well-furnished home.

Gunther's wife was Swiss by birth, and had come from a weathy and cultured family. She spoke High German with a strong Alemannic accent. She endeavored neither to retain the dialect nor to acquire the language of books. Her easy, natural ways seemed the result of careful culture, but there was no attempt to show off either. As a matter of course, she was perfectly conversant with all that related to the economy of the household, and at the same time fully alive to all that makes for beauty and the common weal.

As a singer, Madame Gunther had been a great favorite, both in social circles and at important vocal performances. Her voice was a full, resonant soprano and, although she had given up singing solos, she and her daughters would still take part when great musical works were performed. When fresher voices had taken the solo parts, she had, without a murmur of regret, retired to her place in the chorus.

And thus, too, was her life. Self-reliant and diligent at home, she took an active interest in all public institutions in which women were permitted to take part. She had preserved one priceless heirloom—she was free from nervousness and, with her, public spirit was a duty. She educated her children, managed her household, was a kind and attentive hostess, and performed all this as if obeying the simple instincts of her nature.

She honored her husband. Whatever he said was always of special weight, but still she held fast to her own

judgment. Although she had been living in the capital for nearly twenty years, she had remained a stranger to the whole of the hodge-podge system of caste and the granting of favors by the grace of this or that one. She was not opposed to the system, but she left such matters to those in whose eyes they possessed value and importance; as for herself, she regarded them with absolute indifference.

She was pleased at the honors shown her husband, but that seemed, to her, a matter of course. He was a great man, and if the world had withheld its praise, he would, in her eyes, still have been the greatest and best of men. Her whole bearing expressed this feeling. She had never had the slightest desire to appear at court, and when her husband was obliged to be away from home by day or at night, and often for weeks at a time, she accepted his absence as unavoidably incident to his calling, and refrained from adding to his discomfort by complaining thereof.

When the doctor returned, it was always to a well-ordered home. Refreshed and invigorated by its influence, he would go back to the smooth and slippery precincts of the court.

Irma was now introduced to this home. In appearance, she was all beauty and dignity, and no one would have guessed how forlorn and homeless she felt within her heart. In her hand, she held the bouquet which had, as usual, been sent to her that day, by the king's orders. Gunther had told her that this was his daughter Paula's birthday, and she had brought the flowers for her. They were as lovely as she who brought them. And yet what was it that clung to them? It was almost sinful to use the bouquet as a birthday favor, for Irma felt mortified when she received it. But the flowers were as coin that might be passed on to another.

When Irma entered the house, she felt as if escaping from the noise and bustle of the market-place, or the restless life and cries of the highway, into a temple of domestic peace.

The house was on a little, narrow street, and was surrounded by a garden full of tall, fine trees. A portion of the yard had been fenced off and converted into an aviary.

The hallway and rooms were adorned with statuettes and pictures; the furniture was simple and massive. The doctor's library, reception-room and study were in the upper story.

There had been no preparations of any kind for Irma's reception. The mother had carefully enjoined her daughters not to make any change in their dress on account of the countess's visit. They did not go out to meet her. She was conducted through the summer house, where the flowers and presents for Paula had been arranged, and there, on the steps, sat Madame Gunther and her daughters, busily engaged in needlework. The elder daughter, the wife of Professor Korn of the university, had her child with her. Paula, the younger of the two, who, like Irma, had just entered her twenty-first year, could not be termed beautiful, but had a bright and cheerful countenance and a fine figure.

Irma was warmly welcomed. As it was Gunther's hour for consultation, he soon retired and left her with the ladies. She was surprised, at first, to find herself repeatedly accosted as the daughter of an old friend. She was not here on her own merit, or as the most admired of all the ladies at court, but simply as Count Eberhard's daughter, who had been received into the house from an affectionate sense of duty. When asked about her father's health, she thanked them, although she felt sad at heart to think that she knew so little of him. How utterly different from hers was the life these children led.

Music soon afforded a convenient and agreeable change. On the piano, there lay a composition in manuscript. It was by a nephew of Madame Gunther's, who lived in northern Germany. Madame Gunther told her that he was a philologist by profession, but that, as he would, in all likelihood, lose his eyesight, he had determined to cultivate his decided musical gifts and to perfect himself as a musician.

Irma begged Madame Gunther to sing the song, but she replied that, while her voice was no longer equal to it, that of the countess was exactly suited to it. She gave the manuscript to Irma, who read it over and afterward sang it with rich, full voice, to Madame Gunther's accom-

paniment. The composition was pleasing, but full of suggestions of well-known masters.

Madame Gunther now showed what she meant by practical singing. Irma did not make the best use of the means at her command, and where there were faults showed them too plainly. The doctor's wife instructed her in a simple, unpretentious manner, and Irma remarked that the daughters ought to feel happy to think that they could hear such singing every day.

"And this is my son, the most grateful of all listeners," said Madame Gunther, introducing a handsome young man with a full, brown beard. He was technical director in a manufactory of chemicals, and had brought a student with him. Female friends who lived in the neighborhood joined them soon afterward, and there were merry times on the terrace and in the garden.

Irma remarked the attentive glances directed upon her. It seemed to her as if all knew the troubles that filled her soul; she had completely forgotten how beautiful she was.

"Pardon me, Madame Gunther, for looking at you so," said Irma, suddenly, "but I am somewhat of a dabbler in plastic art, and when I notice the contour and color of your head, it seems as if the Holbein Madonna, of the Dresden Gallery, had come to life and was standing before me."

"Can you really see the resemblance, at this late day?" asked Madame Gunther, blushing slightly; "in former days, it was often remarked and was almost the very first thing my husband said to me in Zurich, now well-nigh twenty-six years ago. On my mother's side I can trace my descent from the family of Burgomaster Maier, by whose orders the picture was originally painted."

Irma was delighted with all that she heard and saw, and especially with Madame Gunther's reminiscences. While speaking of her own efforts in the way of art, she looked at the doctor's wife earnestly, and only wished she were able to model a portrait, in which case Madame Gunther would have to sit to her. She could not help thinking, at the same time, that there was a culture which had been handed down from earliest times: a culture

whose history, running through all ages, is entirely different from that of the nobility, and that the best results of human effort had been brought about, not by the nobles, but by civic liberty.

Madame Gunther asked Irma whether she had a picture of her mother.

Irma replied that her father had had a portrait taken of her mother when in the fullness of her beauty. The picture had been a failure, and almost seemed as if intended for some one else, and so her father had ordered it to be destroyed. He would rather have no picture than a false one.

"That, of itself, is enough to make one honor him for his love of truth," said Madame Gunther. "Most people are satisfied with what is false, and keep on saying: 'you can recognize this or that feature,' until they, at last, persuade themselves that it must once have been a true likeness."

The conversation now turned upon the fact that Irma had never known her mother, and Irma's glance often dwelt upon the two daughters sitting beside their mother.

Madame Gunther said:

"I trust that I've not awakened painful memories, but I regard it as a duty that we should often think of our beloved dead; calmly and peacefully, of course. I've always felt thus with regard to my departed mother, and I hope that, when the time comes, my children may have the same feelings toward me."

Irma pressed Madame Gunther's hand. All that she said was so full of truth, so satisfying.

Madame Gunther told her that it was long before she had acquired a taste for plastic art. Appreciation had, however, gradually dawned upon her; but it was for what related to the human figure, rather than for landscapes. The conversation continued in an easy and cheerful vein. The carriage had long ago been announced; the half-hour which Irma had meant to stay with Madame Gunther had been prolonged to more than an hour. At last, she took her leave with sincere requests to repeat her visit.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Irma returned to the palace, she felt as if coming from another world—from a life far removed from her own.

Gunther was a deep student of the human heart.

In one respect, Irma's visit had had the result foreseen by him; but there was some unknown influence at work, and, perhaps, affecting previously existing conditions. Nothing unless it be the drop that falls from the cloud, is free from foreign admixture, and it is from pure thought alone that one can draw definite conclusions. The water in the spring, and the living human heart, both contain foreign elements within themselves, and no one can foretell how a new ingredient may affect the invisible atoms thus held in solution.

Irma's soul was deeply agitated. Her great power had been exercised and had sought some act in which to spend itself. She had felt happy in the possession of the king's friendship and in the thought that she could furnish so great a mind as his with the congenial companionship he would otherwise be obliged to forego; but the daily bouquet, trivial attention as it was, had aroused and offended her. "He isn't my ideal," said she to herself, and her heart felt lonely again, as it had been ever since she was old enough to think.

Although she had been lonely while at the cloister, she had there found a friend who, if she had little to impart, gratefully accepted all that Irma could give her. At the court, she felt lonely in spite of her wanton humors. She was always obliged to be doing something, be it playing, singing, painting or modeling; anything but this death-like solitude. She was suffering the homesickness of the soul.

"Are not all in this world homeless?" she asked herself, and, while searching her mind for an answer, Gunther had introduced her to his household.

There, all seemed beautiful and complete. There was a home, and a mother who showed that she understood a young and ardent life; the daughters would never suffer as she did. The mother's glance fell upon her and seemed to say: "I shall understand you and will soothe all sorrows you may tell me of." But Irma could not complain, nor exclaim: "Help me!"—and where nothing was required of her, least of all. She could and must help herself.

Madame Gunther had touched her most tender chord: the memory of her mother, and, although Irma gently avoided the subject, her pain was so much the greater.

She wept, but did not know it until a tear dropped on her bosom.

There is so much comfort, so much of real and beautiful seclusion, in a world which is content with itself, and which, in its work and education, requires no favors from those above. How happy the lot of a daughter in such a home, until she, in turn, becomes the head of another household.

Irma felt humbled. All her pride had left her. Her thoughts were still in the garden, where the people moved about in careless unconstraint and where the men, returning from their professional labors, and the maidens, from their domestic duties, were enjoying themselves in common.

"One thing yet remains mine and it is the best," exclaimed Irma, suddenly rising: "solitude is mine. I can yet be lonely, strong, self-contained."

Her waiting-maid entered and announced a lackey sent by the queen.

"Does the queen want to see me at once?"

"Yes, gracious Countess."

"Very well, I'll be there directly."

"Walpurga was right, after all," said she to herself; "I, too, serve."

She felt vexed while she stood before the mirror to have her dress adjusted. She assumed a cheerful expression with which to appear before the queen. She was obliged to do so.

She hastened to obey the queen's orders. When she

got near the door, she drew herself up and again fixed her features in the cheerful, smiling expression 'that she wished them to have, and then entered the room, which, as usual, was dimly lighted.

The queen was sitting in a large arm-chair. She was clad in a dress of snowy white, and a lace handkerchief had been twined about her golden hair.

"Come nearer, dear Countess," said the queen. "I am delighted to see you again. When I see my dear friends, it seems as if I'd been spending the last few weeks in another world. Unfortunately, I am somewhat indisposed again. I owe you special thanks, for I understand that you've kindly interested yourself in the nurse; by keeping her cheerful, you do the prince a service. The king quite agrees with me that you're a real treasure to us. I shall write as much to your father and tell him how happy we are to have you with us. That will surely put him in a better humor with you."

Irma was glad that the queen had so much to say, for she was thus enabled to recover her composure.

"Pray give me the letter that lies on the table," said the queen.

Irma brought it and the queen added:

"Just read these lines of the king's."

Irma read: "Pray tell Countess Irma to keep me constantly informed as to the condition of our son. Remember me to the dear fourth petal of our clover-leaf."

Irma returned the letter with thanks. She felt deeply humiliated to think that the king was trying to force her to write, and at the method he had chosen. Walpurga was right when she spoke of love-glances at the cradle.

Irma almost fainted with grief and shame.

"Won't you do us the favor to write, dear Countess?"

Irma bowed deeply, and the queen continued:

"Of course there will be very little to write about. Man is the highest object in creation and, for that very reason, develops far more slowly than all other creatures."

Irma was about to suggest that, at that rate, a prince would develop still more slowly, but she merely nodded and smiled assent.

She was not in a mood to enter into the queen's way of

thinking. She could see nothing in her but nursery thoughts, with which, at present, she had no sympathy. Though they were vastly more important, what would it matter to me, thought she to herself. Here, just as in Gunther's house, there is a life separate from the world and contented with itself. Here is a mother and her child. Of what use am I? Merely to talk and take part in everything. All others are complete and possess a world of their own; and am I always only to take a part—there, the alms bestowed by friendship; here, those accorded me by royal grace? Am I complete in myself, or am I not?

And while Irma's mind was filled with these thoughts, the queen, in her agitated, soulful manner, went on to say:

"The miracle of life fills me with awe. Have you never thought of the world of meaning suggested by the idea of a child drawing its first breath and opening its eyes for the first time? Air and light are earth's first and last messengers; the first breath and the last; the first glance and the last. How wonderful!"

Irma now felt what it was to serve. Had she been free, and on an equal footing with the one who addressed her, she would have said: 'My dear friend, I am not in the mood, just now, to enter into what you are saying. Within your soul, there is the calm of early morn; in mine, hot, burning noonday. I implore you, leave me to myself.'

Irma was filled with a deep longing for boundless solitude, but she dared not show it. She would gladly have closed her eyes, but obsequious glances were required of her. She listened and answered, but her soul was far away. For the first time in her life, she felt indignant that there was a fellow-being who enjoyed rights of which she was deprived. She felt angry at the queen. She was, several times, on the point of mentioning her visit to Gunther's house, but felt that life there had nothing in common with the constant gloom of the queen's apartment. It seemed to her, moreover, that it were wrong, even in thought, to bring hither the citizen-wife whose footsteps had never entered the palace; and then she thought of her father and his strong sense of independence.

And while such were her thoughts, she spoke of the prince and of Walpurga's amusing peculiarities.

The queen saw that Irma's thoughts were slightly tinged with sadness and, wishing to cheer her up, said:

"Ah, dear countess, I am really languishing for music. Friend Gunther has forbidden my listening to music, lest it might affect my nerves; but one of your little songs would do no harm. I hear that you've learned a beautiful one from the nurse. Won't you sing it for me? May I send for your zither?"

Irma felt more like crying, but she bowed assent and sent a servant for the zither. He brought it, and Irma sang:

"Ah, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee,
And swiftly speed the hours by
When thou art near to me.

My heart doth bear a burden, love,
And thou hast placed it there;
And I would wager e'en my life
That none doth heavier bear."

Within Irma's soul there was a shrill, discordant accompaniment to this song, every word of which had a double meaning.

"And I must sing this to the queen," said the voice within her. "Yes, you two are united. All happy ones are. The unhappy one is always lonely."

Her song was full of gloomy despair; her heart, of anger. "You sing that with deep feeling," said the queen, "and my son hears it, too. One can scarcely say 'hears,' for all that he hears or sees is undefined. Pray repeat the song, so that I may sing it to myself."

Irma sang it again, but this time her mind was more at ease. The queen thanked her heartily. "The doctor has unfortunately forbidden my conversing for any length of time, even with those who are dear to me. I am delighted to think that we shall soon go to the summer palace. Then we will spend much of our time together and with the child. Adieu! dear Countess, write soon, and sing your lovely soul into the child's heart."

Irma went away. While passing through the long cor-

ridors, she stopped several times, as if to remember where she was. At last she reached her room, and gave orders that her horse be saddled at once and that a groom be in waiting.

Irma had just changed her dress when a servant brought her a letter. She broke the seal with a trembling hand and read:

"My child : You have now been at court for eighteen months. I have left you free and uncontrolled. There are many things which I would like to say to you, but cannot write. Writing estranges. Your rooms are ready, and flowers await you. It is now lovely summer and apples on your tree are getting ruddy cheeks like your own, and I should like to see yours again. Come to
"YOUR FATHER."

Irma threw up her hands. "This is deliverance! Yes, I still have a home, and there is still a heart against which I can rest my head. I am coming, father! I am coming!"

Her brain whirled with excitement. She rang for her servant and sent word to the groom that she would not ride out. Then, after having ordered the waiting-maid to pack up enough clothes for several weeks, as quickly as possible she presented herself before the queen and asked for leave of absence.

"I am sorry that you, too, leave me," said the queen, "but I shall gladly part with you if it only helps, as I hope it will, to make you happy. Do all that lies in your power to be in full accord with your father. Believe me, Irma, in the various relations of life, be it as wife or as mother, one is sensible of a constant desire to grow and expand with each succeeding day; the child alone is perfectly satisfied with itself."

The queen and Irma were not in accord that day. Irma was restless and anxious to depart. Whatever detained her, though it were only for a second, excited her resentment.

What the queen was saying might have been interesting to one who was not in a hurry, but not to her whose foot was already on the carriage step.

The parting was, nevertheless, an affecting one, the queen kissing Irma.

All that now remained was to ask Countess Brinkenstein's formal assent. That, too, was obtained.

She had not yet said farewell to Doctor Gunther and his family. She wished to say good-by through Colonel Bronnen, or Baron Schoning, who had told her that he often visited the doctor's house. It was also necessary to take leave of these men and her companions at court. Now that she was about to go, she found out how many acquaintances she had. But where are they when you need them? They are here, simply that you may not need them. Such is the world; but stop! There's one to whom, of all others, you must say farewell. She hurried off to Walpurga.

"Walpurga," she exclaimed, "when you get up tomorrow, shout as loud as you can. By that time, I'll be at our mountain home, and I'll shout back to you until the whole world rings with laughter. I'm going to my father."

"I'm glad of it."

"And aren't you sorry to see me go?"

"Of course; but if your father's still alive you oughtn't miss looking into the eyes that are only once in the world for you. I'm glad, for your father's sake, that he's able to look on such a child as you are. Oh! if my Burgei were only as tall."

"Walpurga, I'll also go to see your husband, your child and your mother. I'll sit down at your table and remember you to your cow and your dog. I shall; depend upon it."

"Oh! how happy they'll be! If Hansei's only at home and not in the woods."

"If he is, I'll have them send for him; and now farewell! don't forget me!"

"You can rely on that," said Walpurga, while Irma hurried away.

She still found time to write to her friend Emma:

"Dearest Emma : Two hours ago, I received a letter from father. He calls me home to him. I have leave

of absence for a fortnight. Do you know what that means? I was obliged to promise that I would surely return; I don't know whether I shall keep my promise. The earth trembles at my feet and my head swims. The world is all chaos, but there will be light! Any one can say: 'Let there be light!' If we only could always do our best. But I shall not write another word. It is enough; I shall see you soon. Come to Wildenort as soon as you can, to your

“IRMA.

“P.S.—I shall take no excuse; you must come. In return, I promise to go to your wedding. Many greetings to all of yours, and, above all, to your Albrecht.”

The sun was already sinking toward the horizon, when Irma, accompanied by her maid, departed for Wildenort.

CHAPTER IX.

SO one can go away, after all, and leave the motley monotony called "the world" behind. Farewell, thou palace, and furnish thy inmates with their daily pleasures. Farewell, ye streets, filled with shops and offices, towers and churches, theaters, music halls and barracks. May fashion be gracious and favor you with customers, clients, guests, applause, and fostering laws. Vanish, frail frippery! I feel like a bird flying from the house-top, out into the wide world. How foolish to remain in the cage when the door is always open. Thou, great bailiff who holds the world captive—thy name is custom!

Thus thought Irma to herself, while seated in the carriage and driving out into the open world.

Her thoughts again recurred to the great house which she had just left. It was the dinner hour and they were waiting for the queen to appear. What a pity that the lord steward had not been present at the creation of the world, for here every one has his fixed place and the service is simply perfect. The queen expresses her regrets at the departure of Countess Irma. All praise her.

"Oh, she's so very good," says one.

"And so merry," says another.

"Somewhat unmanageable, but very amiable," says still another.

But what is there new? It's a bore to be talking of one subject all the time. Help! Zamiel Schnabelsdorf!

"Away with it all!" exclaimed Irma, suddenly: "I shall not look back again, but forward to my father."

The horses stepped out bravely, as if they knew they were carrying a child to her father.

Irma was so impatient that she told the servant who was seated on the box, to give a double fee to the driver so that they might get on faster.

She could hardly wait until she saw her father, so anxious was she to rest her head upon his breast.

What did she desire? To complain to him? How could he help her? She knew not. All she knew was that, with him, there must be peace. She wished to be sheltered, protected; no longer alone. To obey him and anticipate his every wish would be her highest happiness. To be released from herself, and to desire nothing that did not minister to the joy of another—oh, how happy the thought! The whole earthly load is removed. Thus must it be with the blessed spirits above! Thus should we imagine angels to be! They want for nothing and need nothing, they never change and never grow, are neither young nor old. They are eternal, and are ever laboring for and through others. Their works bring joy to the world and to themselves. They are the undying rays of an eternal sun.

During the greater part of the journey, Irma's brain was filled with such unintelligible dreams, and the whole world seemed to be saying: "Father—Daughter."

She regained composure at last. It would not do to arrive at the castle in this state.

Agitation is weakness, and it had always been her father's aim to foster strength of mind and self-command.

Irma forced herself to observe what was going on about her.

It was twilight when they reached the first post-station. Irma fancied she could almost feel the air of her native mountains, although they were still far off.

They drove on at a rapid pace. The evening bells were ringing, and the air was filled with their sounds, carrying them out to the men and women in the fields, and measuring time and eternity for them.

What would the world be without its bells, whose pealing harmonies are to serve as a substitute for the beautiful creations of antique art?

But these thoughts failed to satisfy Irma. They lifted her out of the world, whilst she desired to occupy herself with what was present and established.

In the villages through which they drove, and the fields by which they passed, there was singing, interrupted, now and then, by the rattling of the carriage wheels, and Irma thought: We make too much noise in this world, and thus miss enjoying what the rest may have to tell us.

No thoughts were to her liking. No outlook pleased her.

The stars appeared in the heavens, but what were they to man? They shine for him who is free and has naught to seek on earth. She, however, was seeking, and, in the world's vast circle, could see nothing but two starry eyes directed upon her; and they were her father's.

They continued on their journey, disturbing lazy horses and sleepy postilions at every station.

It was long after midnight when they arrived at Wildenort.

Irma alighted at the manor-house and, accompanied by the servant, knocked at the door.

Her father had not expected her so soon. There were no lights in the large house, or its extensive outbuildings.

Dogs barked, for strangers were coming. There was not even a dumb beast that knew Irma, for she was a stranger in her father's house.

Two plowboys passed by. They were astonished to see the beautiful lady at that hour, and she was obliged to tell them who she was.

She ordered her rooms to be opened. Her father slept near by. She longed to see him, but controlled herself. He could sleep calmly and not know that she was breathing near him. She, too, soon fell asleep and did not wake till broad daylight.

Stepping softly, old Eberhard entered the ante-chamber where Irma's maid was already sitting.

"My lady the countess, is still sleeping. It was three o'clock, just about daybreak, when we arrived."

"What made you hurry so and take no rest?"

"I don't know; but the countess was quite excited on the way. They couldn't drive fast enough for her. When my lady wishes anything, it must be done at once."

"Who are you, dear child?"

"Her ladyship's maid."

"No, but who are your parents? What took you to court?"

"My father was riding-master to Prince Adolar, and her royal highness had me educated in the convent school."

A chain of dependents, from generation to generation, thought the old man to himself.

The maid looked at him wonderingly.

He was tall and broad-shouldered.

He wore the mountaineer's dress and a white horn whistle hung by a cord from his neck. His fine head bent slightly forward and rested on a massive neck; his gray hair and beard were thick and closely cropped; his brown eye still sparkled, as if in youth; his expressive countenance looked like embossed work, and his whole figure resembled that of a knight who has just laid aside his armor and put himself at ease.

"I wish to see my daughter," said the old man as he went into the adjoining room. It was dark. Eberhard stepped to the window, on tiptoe, and drew aside the green damask curtain. A broad ray of light streamed into the room. He stood before the bed and, with bated breath, watched the sleeping one.

Irma was beautiful to behold. Her head, encircled by the long, loosened, golden-brown tresses; the clear, arched brow, the delicately chiseled nose, the mouth with its exquisitely curved upper lip, the rosy chin, the full cheeks with their peach-like glow—over all there lay a calm and peaceful expression. The beautiful, small, white hands lay folded on her breast.

Irma was breathing heavily, and her lips moved as if with a sad smile. It is difficult to sleep with one's hands folded on the breast. The hands gently loosened themselves, but the left one still rested on her heart. The father lifted it carefully and laid it at her side. Irma slept on quietly. Silently, the father took a chair and sat down at her bedside. While he sat there, two doves alighted on the broad window-sill, where they remained cooing with each other. He would have liked to frighten them away, but he dared not stir. Irma slept on and heard nothing.

Suddenly the pigeons flew away, and Irma opened her eyes.

"Father!" she cried, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him. "Home again! Oh, how happy it makes me! Do draw the other curtain, so that I can

see you better, and pray open the window so that I may inhale my native air! Oh, father! I've been away and now I've come back to you, and you won't let me go away again. You will support me in your powerful arms. Oh, now I think of what you said to me in my dream. We were standing together up on the Chamois hill and you took me up in your arms and, while carrying me, said: 'See, my child; so long as one of your parents lives, there is some one to help you bear up in the world.' Oh, father! Where have I been? Where am I now?"

"Be calm, my child. You've been at court and now you're home again. You're excited. Calm yourself. I'll call the servant. Breakfast is ready in the arbor."

He kissed her forehead and said:

"I kiss all your good and pure thoughts, and now let us live together again, as plain and sensible beings."

"Oh, that voice! To be in my father's house and at home once more. Life elsewhere is just like sleeping in one's clothes. 'Tis only at home that one can rest; for there no bond oppresses us."

He was about to leave, but Irma detained him.

"I feel so happy," said she, "to be here and look at you; to see you and think of you, all the time."

The father passed his hand over her forehead, and she said:

"Let your hand rest there. I now believe in the laying on of hands; my own experience convinces me."

He remained at her bedside for some time, his hand still resting upon her forehead.

At last he said:

"And now arise, my child. I shall expect you at breakfast."

"I am glad there is some one who can command me to 'get up.'"

"I don't command, I simply advise you. But, my dear child, something strange must be going on with you, as you understand nothing in its literal sense."

"Yes, father,—very strange! but that's all over, now."

"Well then, follow me as soon as you can; I shall await you."

The father went out to the arbor, where he awaited her

coming. He moved the two cups and the beautiful vase of flowers first to one position, and then to another, and arranged the white table-cloth. Shortly after, Irma entered, clad in a white morning dress.

"You're—you're taller than I thought you were," said the father, a bright color suffusing his face.

He stroked his daughter's cheek, while he said:

"This white spot on your rosy cheek, extending from the jaw to the cheek-bone, is just as your mother had it."

Irma smiled and, grasping both of her father's hands, looked into his eyes. Her glance was so full of happiness that the old man, who, at all times, preserved his equanimity, found his eyes filling with tears. He endeavored to conceal them, but Irma said:

"That won't in the least detract from your heroism. Oh, father, why are we such slaves to ourselves? Why should we be afraid to appear as we are? Your great rule is that we should follow out our natures. Why do we not always do so? Oh, father, let me send up a joyful shout to my native mountains, to the forests and the lakes! I'm with ye, again, my constant friends! Let us live together! Hold fast by me and I will be as faithful as ye are! I greet thee, sun; and yonder hill under which my mother rests—"

She could not go on. After some time, the old man said:

"It would be well, my child, if we could live out our life in all its native purity; but it is neither fear of ourselves, nor self-imposed slavery that induces us to avoid such scenes, such violent agitation. It is a deep-seated feeling that, by contrast, the next moment must appear bald and commonplace. It would oblige us to plunge from a life of excessive sensibility into the every-day world. It is for this reason that we should, and do, exercise self-control; for such emotions should not exhaust themselves in what might be called a devout outburst, but should extend through all our acts and thoughts, even to the smallest and most insignificant. That is the source of our noblest aspiration. Yes, my child, the very ones who thus, as it were, divide their life in two, profane the one-half of it, while they secretly flatter themselves: We

have had great and noble emotions and are still capable of feeling them."

The old housekeeper brought the coffee. Irma waited on her father and told him that she expected Emma and her betrothed. Eberhard said:

"When Emma was here, years ago, your thoughts ran in the same vein as at present. We were on the Chamois hill, where a fine view of the great lake can be obtained, and were waiting to see the sunrise. Emma, in her matter-of-fact and plain-spoken way, said: 'I don't think it worth while to lose one's sleep and go to so much trouble for this. I find the sunset fully as beautiful and far less troublesome.' What did you answer her at the time?"

"I can't remember, father, dear."

"But I do. You said: 'The sunrise is far more elevating, but I don't know what one can do to have the rest of the day in keeping with the lofty mood thus inspired. Sunset is better for us, because the world then veils itself and allows us to rest. After beholding the highest, there are only two things left us—sleep and music.'"

"But, father, I've ceased to think so. Yesterday, during the whole of my drive, I was haunted by the thought: What are we in the world for, after all? Without us the trees would still grow; the beasts, the birds and the fishes would still live without us. All these have a purpose in the world; man alone is obliged to seek one. Men paint, and build, and till the soil, and study how they may the better kill each other. The only difference, after all, between mankind and the beast is that man buries his dead."

"And have you ventured so far, my child? I am indeed glad that you're with me once again. You must have had much to contend with. I trust you will once more learn to believe that our proper destiny is, to live in accordance with nature and reason. Look at the world!" said he, with a smile. "A maiden twenty-one years of age, and a countess to boot, asks: 'Why am I in the world?' Ah, my child, to be beautiful, to be good, to be as lovely as possible in mind as well as in outward form. Conduct yourself so that you can afford to wish that every

one might know you thoroughly.—But enough of this, for the present.”

The hour that father and daughter thus spent together in the arbor was full of happiness for both, and Irma repeatedly expressed a wish that she could thus live forever.

Oblivious of all else, each seemed to constitute the other's world.

“You've become my great tall girl,” said her father. He had intended to say: “You must have gone through a great deal, for you return to your father and have nothing to tell about matters trifling or personal to yourself.” He had intended to say this, but simply repeated: “You've become my great girl.”

“And, father! you order me to remain with you, do you not?”

“You know very well that I've never ordered you to do anything, since you were able to think for yourself,” replied the father. “I'd have you act according to your own convictions, and not against your will or reason.”

Irma was silent. She had not received the answer she had hoped for, and, feeling that she must herself bring about the desired result, determined to do so.

A forest-keeper came to receive instructions in regard to the woods. Eberhard replied that he would ride out there himself. Irma begged to be allowed to accompany him and, her father consenting, she soon appeared in a hunting-dress and rode off with him across the meadows and in the direction of the forest.

Her face glowed with animation while she felt herself moving along on the spirited steed, through the shady, dewy forest.

While her father was giving his orders to the forest-keepers, Irma was resting on a mossy bank under a broad spreading fir tree. Her father's dog had already made friends with her, and now came up and licked her hand. Thus awakened, she arose and walked over toward the field at the edge of the forest. The first object her eyes fell upon was a four-petaled clover-leaf. She quickly possessed herself of it. Her father now joined her and noticed her happy looks.

"How much good it has done me to rest on the earth," said she.

He made no reply. He did not think it necessary that every feeling, however deep, should find vent in words.

Irma looked up in surprise. In the world of conversation, small change is paid back for every remark.

They soon returned home.

During the afternoon they were seated together in the cool library. Cicero's words, "When I am alone, then am I least alone," were written in letters of gold, over the door.

The father was writing and would occasionally look at his daughter, who was engaged with a volume of Shakespeare. She was reading the noblest thoughts, taking them up into herself, and making them a part of her own soul.

Eberhard felt it a joy to detect his own glance in another's eye, to hear his own thoughts from other lips, and that eye and those lips his child's—to note that her soul reflected his, although native temperament and peculiar impressions had served to make hers different from and independent of his own. The ideal that had filled his youthful dreams now stood before him, incarnate.

Eberhard soon closed his book and smiled to himself. He was not so strong as he had imagined. Now that his child was with him, he could not keep on with his work, as he had done the day before. He sat down by Irma, and, pointing to Spinoza's and Shakespeare's works, that always lay on his work-table, he said:

"To them, the whole world was revealed. Although they lived centuries ago, they are my constant companions on these lonely mountains. I shall pass away and leave no trace of my thoughts behind me, but I've already lived the life eternal in the companionship of the noblest minds. The tree and the beast live only for themselves, and during the short period that ends with death. With life, we inherit the result of centuries of thought and he who, within himself, has become a true man fully embodies the idea of humanity. Thus you live on, with your father and with all that is true and beautiful in the history of the human race."

There was a long pause. It was, at last, broken by the father's saying:

"Didn't you come in a court carriage?"

"Certainly."

"And so you intend to return to court?"

"Father, don't let us speak of that, now. I've not, like you, strength enough to drop from the greatest heights down to the level of every-day life."

"My child, every-day affairs are the highest that can engage us."

"But I'd like to forget that there is such a thing as a court, or that I've ever been, or ever shall be, anything but part of your heart and soul."

"No, you're to live for yourself; but if you wish to remain with me, all you need do is to send the carriage back."

"I shall have to return, though it be but for a few days. I have only leave of absence, not a discharge. The best thing would be for you to go with me and bring me back again."

"I can't go to court, as you well know; and I give you credit for enough strength to take yourself away from there. I was watching you to-day while you lay asleep. There's nothing false in you; as yet, no evil passions cloud your brow. I know your brother is anxious to have you marry, and I, too, wish that you may become a good wife and mother. But I fear that you have become too much your own, ever to become another's. Be that as it may, my child, look at the scene spread out before you. Myriads of flowers are blooming silent and unknown. Should a wanderer pass by and feast his eyes upon them, or even pluck a flower, it has lived for him. Should it blossom and fade away unseen, it has lived for itself. But, my child, don't go out of your way to please me. How long is your leave?"

"A fortnight."

"Let us spend the time in truth and cheerfulness, and then act as your judgment dictates."

CHAPTER X.

THE days passed by quickly. Eberhard had little to do with his neighbors, but was always glad to see the burgomaster of the village, who was, also, a deputy to the Diet, and to consult with him regarding the affairs of the community.

Irma spent much of her time alone. She read, embroidered, painted and sang. After the first few days, a reaction set in.

"What is this life?" she asked herself, "of what use? I work for dress—dress for my soul and for my body. And to what purpose? The mirror sees me, the walls hear me, and I have my father for one hour at noon and another in the evening."

She endeavored to control her flights, and, although she succeeded in that, could not prevent herself from thinking of one who was distant. She would look around as if she could hear his footsteps and as if the air were filled with his presence; and that man was—the king.

She could not but think that he expected a letter from her, and what had he received? The news of her departure. Why should she insult and mortify him?

While at Wildenort, she was several times on the point of writing to him. She wanted to tell him that she had meant to flee from him; nay, from herself. Framing the sentences in her mind, she would say to herself: Flight is not cowardice. Indeed, it requires great strength thus to tear one's self away. She meant to make this clear to him. She did not wish him to think ill of humanity and, least of all, of her. His great and extended energy should not be weakened, or even disturbed, by the consciousness that mankind had no conception of the truly noble. She owed it, both to him and to herself, to explain this; but it is difficult to do it all in writing. She would, therefore, return and tell him all, and, after that, they

would, although distant, be united in the noblest thoughts. She felt satisfied that she would find full compensation for a lonely life in the recollection of one moment of perfect communion with a noble mind, and the consciousness of truth and purity in thought and deed.

Irma was delighted to think that she had thus liberated herself.

She refrained, as far as possible, from speaking to her father about the court; but a remark would, now and then, involuntarily escape her, and she would tell how the king and the queen had praised this or that, or had uttered such and such a remark, and it was easily to be seen that she attached special importance to what they had said.

"That's the way with men," said Eberhard, smiling. "They know what they are, or, at least, ought to; and yet they give a prince the right to stamp them with a value. It is he who determines: you are worth so and so much; you a ducat, you a thaler, you a mere brass counter, you a privy councilor and you a colonel. The story of the creation of the world is thus ever renewed. There it says that the Creator led the beasts out before man so that he might give them names. Here the human animals come to the prince and say: 'Give us a name, or we shall feel as if naked and be afraid.' "

Irma started at these harsh words. Solitude had brought her father to this point. She could not refrain from saying:

"You do the king great injustice; he has a noble mind and is full of intelligence."

"Intelligence! I know all about that," replied Eberhard. "He can ask questions without number, propound problems and, for his dessert, would fain have an epitome of ecclesiastical history, physiology or any other interesting department of knowledge. But he never applies himself: never reads a work through. He requires excerpts and essences. I know all about it. And the courtly e singers place their thoughts at his service. Don't be, my child, that I underrate the king's efforts. We always told him: 'You are a genius!' They are persuading kings that they possess genius, either

military, political or artistic. All who approach a monarch are obliged, even in an intellectual sense, to attire themselves in court dress. He never sees men and things in their true colors; they all drape themselves to please him. Nevertheless, I believe the king honestly endeavors to see things as they are, and that's a great deal; but he can't shake off the magic spell of set forms and phrases."

Irma's lips trembled with emotion. She did not believe that her father meant to weaken her interest in the king, since he could not know of its existence; but his antagonism irritated her and she saw, with alarm, that no help was to be looked for in that quarter. She might have shared her father's solitude, if he had honored the exalted man as she did. He might have done homage to the noble mind, even though it was a monarch's, without doing violence to his republican feelings, or his sense of justice. But now he destroyed every bridge that had led to a better understanding and to justice. If another had spoken thus of the king, she would have made him feel her wrath, and now she felt that her silence was a sufficient sacrifice to filial duty. Her heart seemed to close up within itself, as if never again to be opened. She was a stranger in her father's house, and now doubly felt that she had never been at home there. She forced herself to appear cheerful and tranquil.

Eberhard observed that an inner conflict agitated her, and thought it was merely a struggle between court life and solitude. He did not aid her, for he thought that she could best gain peace if she fought the battle for herself.

On Sunday morning—Eberhard never went to church—he said:

"Have you time to listen to a long story?"

"Certainly."

"Then let me make my will while I am yet in health."

"Pray, father, don't do that. Spare me!"

"I don't mean as to my possessions, but as to myself. We have no picture of your dear mother, and none of you children have any idea of her appearance—so pure, so lovely, so full of sunshine; and, for that reason, I mean to give you a picture of my life. Treasure it. Who knows when I may again have a chance? If there's any-

thing that you don't understand or that seems to you in danger of being misinterpreted, ask me about it. I don't find such objections an interruption. I pursue my life in its even tenor; nothing disturbs me. I've accustomed myself to improve my estate, to give orders to my servants and to answer their questions, and, afterward, to take up the train of thought just where it was broken off; and so you, too, may interrupt me whenever you care to.

"My father, who was a free count, was always proud of his direct relations to the empire. Unto his last day, he would never acknowledge the unity of the kingdom and would always ask; 'How goes it over there?' He regarded his domain as distinct from the rest, and his family as on an equality with all princely houses."

"And why, dear father," asked Irma, "would you destroy these beautiful memories that have been handed down from generation to generation?"

"Because history itself has destroyed them, and justly too. It is necessary for the preservation of mankind that new races should constantly ascend to the surface; but I didn't mean to tell you about my father. I spent a happy youth in this house. My preceptor, although an ecclesiastic, was a man of liberal opinions. I entered the military service a year before my father's death and, though I say it myself, presented no mean figure while there, for I possessed good looks and an iron frame. I was stationed with my regiment, in a fortress belonging to the confederation. While recklessly riding one day, I fell from my horse and dislocated my hip. It laid me up for a long time and thus afforded me an opportunity to become better acquainted with our regimental surgeon, Doctor Gunther. Has he never told you of the times we passed together?"

"He has merely mentioned them. It was only a few days ago that the king told me I was right in saying that Doctor Gunther would only furnish verbal prescriptions when they were demanded and were really necessary."

"Ah! and so the king said that you were right? 'You are right'—that is a real mark of grace and should make one happy for a whole day and perhaps even longer. Isn't it so?"

“Father—didn’t you mean to tell me more about your life with Gunther? ”

“Ah, my child, that was a wondrous time. As far as I was able, I dived, with him, into the study of philosophy. I can still remember, as if it were this very moment, the very hour and the very place by the fortress wall—it was a dull evening in autumn; I can still see the leaves as they fell from the trees—when Gunther for the first time, explained to me the great saying of the all-wise one: ‘Self-preservation is the first law of nature.’ I stood as if rooted to the spot; it dawned upon me like a revelation, and has never since left me. Although at times obscured by the events of life, ‘preserve thyself,’ has always been before my mind. I have faithfully lived up to the great precept, and alas, as I now see, too completely and selfishly. The man who lives only for himself does not live a complete life, but I can confess this to you, of all others, without fear. It was only later that I came thoroughly to know the great right of sovereignty that belongs to every human being. I had done much thinking before that, but never in logical connection. You cannot imagine what courage it requires, on the part of a favorite and respected officer, to venture on the study of philosophy; how opposed it is to the very idea of military service, how improper it seems to one’s superiors, and how ridiculous to one’s comrades. Military service so exhausts the body, by daily, and for the greater part, useless exercises, that it renders it difficult to cultivate one’s mind. I often excused myself, as unwell, and remained in my room during the loveliest weather, simply on account of my studies. Our regiment was ordered to the capital, and Gunther accepted my offer of a discharge. He became a professor and I attended lectures. But I was painfully conscious of my deficiency in knowledge and ardently longed for a chance to devote my life to perfecting my education. An unforeseen event helped to bring about the desired end. I had become gentleman of the bedchamber and spent much of my time at court. At that early day, I observed the ineradicable, servile spirit that dwells in man. Every one rejoices that there are others lower down in the scale than himself, and is willing, on that

account, to suffer some to stand above him. Princes are not to blame for this ladder of nonsense. One day while at the summer palace, the king had gone out hunting, and although it was long past the dinner hour, not a glimpse of him was to be seen. The chamberlains and the court ladies—I forget their titles—were walking in the park. They would sit down on the benches, look through their spy-glasses, and endeavor, unsuccessfully however, to keep up a sustained conversation; for the ladies and gentlemen, both young and old, were possessed of vulgar hunger. And still the herdsman who was to put fodder in the rack for them, did not make his appearance. Your uncle Willibald pacified his gnawing hunger with little biscuits, which did not destroy his appetite. Hours passed, while they walked about like Jews on the Day of Atonement. But they laughed and joked—at least they tried to—while their stomachs growled. And though your uncle had thirty horses in his stable at home, with oxen and cows and many broad acres besides, he was content to serve and wait there, because he took great pride in being lord chamberlain. At that time, my child, I was as old as you are now, and I swore to myself never more to be a servant to any man. At last, the king's hunting carriage arrived. All were profuse in their greetings and received him with smiling faces. And yet his majesty was in a bad humor, for while he had been unsuccessful, General Kont, who had been one of the hunting party, had committed the impropriety of shooting a deer with twelve antlers. The general felt very unhappy at his good luck, and his head hung as mournfully as that of the dead beast. He apologized again and expressed his regrets that his majesty had not killed the stag. With rueful countenance, the monarch congratulated him. The king looked at me and asked: "How are you?"

" 'Very hungry, Your Majesty,' was my answer. The king smiled, but the rest of the court were horror-struck at my impertinence.

"We were obliged to wait another half-hour, while the king changed his dress and, at last, we went to dinner.

"My child, if you were to tell the story to a courtier, he

would consider me intolerably stupid; but that meal was the last I ever ate at princely table.

"I know that I'm talkative—I'm an old man. I merely wanted to say: Look about you and see how many human sacrifices they are constantly requiring.

"The idea of princely dignity is a noble and beautiful one. The prince should embody the unity of the state; but, although the idea, in itself, is beautiful, the knowledge that its realization requires a pyramid of worn-out creatures, divested of human dignity, renders it repulsive to me.

"Irma, I feel as if I must impress the testament of my soul upon yours. The moment you feel that you've lost the smallest portion of your crown of human dignity, flee, without hatred or contempt; for he who carries such feelings in his soul is heavily laden and can never breathe freely. I don't hate the world; neither do I despise it. It simply appears to me strange, decayed, distant. Nor can I hate or despise any one, because his belief is different from mine.

"But as I don't wish to teach you, I will go on with my story. I applied for my discharge and entered the university as a student. I soon left, however, in order to continue my education in an agricultural school. After that, I traveled and, as you know, spent an entire year in America. I had a great desire to become acquainted with that new phase of history in which men are born to intellectual freedom and are not constantly looking back toward Palestine, Greece or Rome. I don't find the world of the future in America. All there is still, as it were, in a state of ferment suggestive of primeval processes; but whether a new civilization will be the result, is more than I know. I do know, however, that all mankind is patiently waiting for a new moral compact. But I, and many more of us, will never live to see it realized.

"Will the world of the future be governed by pure ideas, or will it again look up to some lofty personage as its exemplar? I should wish for the former, but its realization seems far off.

"Now to continue with the story of my life.

"I returned home and, meeting your mother, was un-

utterably happy. She was alone in the world. I have enjoyed the greatest of all happiness; there is none other like it. Three years after you were born, your mother died. I cannot give you particulars about her. Her whole appearance was one of strength and purity. The world regarded her as cold and reserved, but she was ardent and open-hearted, beautiful to her very heart, but only for me. I know that if she had been spared to me, I would have become one of the best and kindest of men. I dare not think of that.

"It was not to be.

"But I feel as if sanctified through her, for since that time no base thought has ever entered my soul; nor have I ever committed a deed that I should feel ashamed to confess to my daughter.

"She died, and I stood alone, my violent nature confronting the enigma of life.

"Although I could not give my children a stepmother, I became a stepfather to them. Yes, let me speak on: I am unsparing toward myself. I know that if others heard me, they would say that I am using too strong language. It is the fashion to be indulgent nowadays, but I am not in the mode. I put my children away from me. I placed you with your aunt, until you entered the convent, and Bruno remained with me until he went to the seminary. You were in fine institutions, with expensive fees, but you were nevertheless put away from me. You did not know your father; you merely knew that he was alive, but did not live with him. You grew up like orphaned children.

"It is only two years since I confessed this to myself. For weeks, it robbed me of sleep, of feeling and of thought, and still I adhered to it. The demon called sophistry was ever telling me: 'You could have been of no use to your children. You had still too much to do for yourself, and it is better for them that they should become free human agents through their own unaided efforts than through you.' There may be some truth in it, but nevertheless, I've put my children away from me."

The old man paused. Irma laid her hand upon his and gently stroked it.

"'Tis well. I've said it at last.

"I remained here, leading a solitary but not a lonely life. I communed with the greatest minds and, at the same time, easily managed our estate.

"I devoted myself to national affairs, but soon withdrew. I can't belong to a party, not even to the one that calls itself the party of freedom. It includes many noble-hearted men whom I honor and respect, but they put up with too many frivolous comrades who, while they prate of equality and of the highest good of man, do not hesitate to sacrifice their fellow-beings to themselves. Aristocratic triflers are simply vicious, but democratic triflers are corrupters of ideas. He who dare not wish that the whole people should think and act as he does, has no right to term himself a free and honest man.

"If liberty does not rest on morality, what is there to distinguish it from tyranny? What is tyranny? The egotistical abuse of beings endowed with equal rights to ourselves. A tyrant, in effect, denies his God. A frivolous democrat blasphemes Him. By the term God, I mean the full conception of the world's moral law. I was a hermit in the midst of the crowd, and am happier and more consistent, when away from the world.

"And now I am here leading a solitary life."

"Isn't it sad to be so lonely?" asked Irma.

"If I felt lonely, it would be very hard," replied Eberhard; "but man should not feel lonely, though he be alone. *Ennui* and loneliness have no resting-place here. Men who are nothing to themselves are lonely wherever they be; but let me continue my story.

"Gunther's defection caused me the greatest sorrow, but I was unjust toward him. He always was a friend of court life and regarded it as the culmination of culture. He was always too æsthetic and would often say: 'I, too, have a claim on the luxuries, the comforts, the pleasures of life and am determined to have my share of them.' That led him to court and caused him to desert free science and, at the same time, to lose both himself and me.

"You have probably been told, and have perhaps even yourself thought, that I am a misanthrope. He who hates mankind is a vain fool. In what respect is he

better than the rest, or different from them? I don't hate mankind. I only know that most of them, either by their own efforts or through those of others, appear in false colors. They affect an interest in things that do not concern them and, in most instances, do not even know that it is affectation. I have often been deceived and cheated, but, I frankly confess, it was because I deceived myself. I gave forth what was best in me, and imagined that others were with me, but it was mere politeness that induced them to assent. They were not hypocrites; it was I who deceived myself. I imagined myself in a world in which all was peace and harmony, while, in fact, I was alone, completely alone. Every one who has a character of his own, is alone. There is no such thing as perfect accord; to live out one's self is all that remains. But most men do not care to do this, and they are best off. They live as custom and morals require, and do not greatly concern themselves about the present or the past. They jump or dawdle as the case may be from mood to mood, from enjoyment to enjoyment, and as long as they can always see the same face when they look in the glass, are perfectly content. Such faces never change. If the human countenance always expressed the thoughts that fill the soul, you would not be able to recognize any one from day to day, or even from hour to hour. I do not know, my child, where I am leading you to; I only meant to tell you that I am not a misanthrope. I love all men. I know that, at bottom, they cannot be different from what they are, and that honest nature still lies concealed beneath their frizzled, overloaded, glittering masks. They cannot reveal it, however, and in spite of their false, cunning ways, there still remains a great and wise precept: 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And now let me add that I forgive your brother, too. He has deeply mortified me, for the deepest mortification that one can suffer is at the hands of one's child.

"I cannot force Bruno to act against his will, nor do I wish to. It is a strange world. The struggle between father and son drags on through all ages. My son defends the old, and I the new; but I must bear with it all.

"Freedom alone accords with the dictates of nature

and reason. But you cannot force one to be free; nor do I wish to force you, in any way. Most women would rather yield to nature than affection, but I do not regard you as an ordinary woman, nor do I wish you to be one. You should—"

Although Eberhard had said that he did not wish to be interrupted, something now came which did interrupt him.

It was a messenger with a letter for Irma. She recognized the handwriting of her friend Emma, and hurriedly opening the letter, read as follows:

"*Irma* : I cannot come to thee. I have said farewell to the world. Three weeks ago to-day, my Albrecht lost his life through the bite of a mad dog. My life for this world is also at an end. I humbly submit to the inscrutable will of the Almighty. I have vowed to take the veil. I am here now, and shall never again leave this spot. Come, as soon as thou canst, to thy

"SISTER EUPHROSYNE,
"In the convent of *Frauenwörth*."

Irma handed the letter to her father to read.

"And so the bite of a mad dog has destroyed two human lives. Who will explain this?" exclaimed Irma.

"In that respect, religion is just as impotent as we are. Like reason, she commands us to obey nature's law."

The messenger waited, and Irma went off to write an answer in which she promised to come.

Meanwhile, Eberhard sat alone. He had confided the story of his life to his child—and what would it avail? How often had he realized that no teaching, be it ever so noble, can change the human mind. Life, observation and experience can alone produce conviction. The weak point of dogmatism is that it attempts to teach that which can only be learned from life itself. His children had not shared in his life, and it was now of little avail to recount it to them, in all its details, or to explain the motives that directed it. There was enough of contradiction implied in the fact that the father was obliged to tell what his life had been.

In his own mind, Eberhard acknowledged that his own conduct had borne its legitimate results. He had no real

claim to filial affection; at all events, not to the degree in which he craved it, for he had lived for himself alone.

When Irma returned and asked permission to visit her friend Emma, he nodded assent. He had boasted that nothing could interrupt him. He might use the rule for himself, but not for others. He had told his child the story of his life—who knew but what this untoward interruption would efface it all from her memory?

CHAPTER XI.

SEATED in the open court carriage, Irma rode over hill and dale. She lay back on the cushions; the waiting-maid and the lackey sat on the back seat.

Emma's sad and sudden message had almost paralyzed her; but, now that she was in the carriage, her strength returned. Travel and change of air always exerted a magic influence over her.

The echo of her father's story followed her during a great part of the journey. She had listened with great interest, although the story itself had made but a faint impression upon her. An inner voice told her: These matters are not so serious or important as he takes them. It is his peculiar temperament that causes them to affect his course in life. It would not be so with another. It was enough that she was able to do justice to his eccentricity. He could hardly expect it to exert any decided influence upon her. Emma's fate was horrible, maddening; but her father's was not. Much of his life-trouble was mere self-torment. He spoke of repose, and yet knew it not.

With all Irma's affection for her father, she had really so little in common with him, that the painful expression that played about his mouth, while he told her his story, simply served to remind her of the Laocoön.

Irma shook her head quite petulantly.

What a chaos is the world!

A mad dog destroys a life and, here and there, solitary beings are tormenting themselves to death. Every one is conscious of some fault or weakness; all seek the un-

attainable and, in unending attempts and trials, life is spent. In the midst of this chaos, a single figure appears. It is full, beautiful, great, sure of life and, in truth, controls life. Irma turned back as if to say: "Alas! it is not you, father, although you could and ought to be the one. The king alone is the one free being on the pinnacle of life."

A smile played about her lips while she thought of him. She looked up at the blue heavens and, forgetting whither she was going, felt as if gentle arms were carrying her away over hill and dale.

An eagle was winging its flight far above the mountain tops. Irma's eyes followed it for a long while. She ordered the driver to stop the carriage, and the servant alighted in order to receive her ladyship's order. She motioned him to mount the box again, and, though all the comforts wealth affords were hers, stopped in the midst of wild nature to watch the eagle hovering in the air, until it at last disappeared in the clouds.

"If one must die, I'd like to die thus," said an inner voice, "fly into heaven and be no more."

They drove on. For the rest of the journey, Irma did not utter a word. It was toward evening when the lackey said: "We've reached the place."

The road descended toward the lake, by the shore of which the carriage stopped. The convent was on an island in the center of the lake, and the sounds of the curfew bells filled the air. The sun was still visible over the mountain tops, its rays were almost horizontal, and the dancing, sparkling waves looked like so many lights swimming to and fro. The surface of the lake was rapidly assuming a golden hue.

At the sound of the evening bells, the lackey and the postilion lifted their hats and the waiting-maid folded her hands. Irma also folded her hands, but did not pray. She thought to herself: The sound of the bells is pleasant enough, if one can listen to them from without, and then return to the happy world; but to those who are within the convent, it is a daily death-knell; for life such as theirs, is death.

Irma's mood was not in sympathy with that of her

friend, and she did her best to feel as befitted the occasion.

While they were getting the boat ready, she overheard the lackey speaking with another servant whose face she remembered to have seen at court.

She heard the court lackey saying:

"My master's been here for some days and has been waiting for something; I don't know what."

Irma would have liked to ask with whom he had come, but a sudden fear overpowered her and she was unable to speak a word.

Accompanied by the waiting-maid, she stepped into the boat. An old boatman and his daughter rowed the rudderless skiff. The waters of the lake were deep and dark. The sun was setting, and the shadows of the western mountains were reflected in dark outlines on the hills along the shore. The fresh-fallen snow lay on the glaciers, whose white crests contrasted sharply with the wooded hills of the foreground and the clear blue sky. Below, all was as silent and dusky as though they were sailing into the realm of shadows.

"Is this your daughter?" asked Irma, addressing the old boatman.

He nodded a glad assent, delighted to find her conversant with the dialect of that portion of the country. Her intercourse with Walpurga had kept her in practice.

"Yes," replied the boatman, "and she'd like to go into service with some good family. She can sew well and—"

"Remain with your father; that's the best thing you can do," said Irma to the girl.

They rowed on in silence.

"How deep is the lake here?" inquired Irma.

"Sixty fathoms, at least."

Irma's hand played with the water, and she was pleased with the thought that human beings could so easily and boldly move along over a threatening, watery grave. She leaned a little way over the side of the boat, and the boatman called out:

"Take care, miss!"

"I can swim," replied Irma, splashing the waves.

"That's all very well," said the old man, laughing. "They can all swim until they have to, and then all's over; and if they happen to have clothes hanging to them, mighty few can swim."

"You're right there. Our gay frippery would drag us down."

The old man did not understand her and made no reply.

She was quite excited and asked: "Have many persons been drowned in this lake?"

"Very few; but just below us, there's the body of a young man, twenty-one years old."

"How was he lost?"

"They say he'd been drinking too freely, but I think that he had a sweetheart in the convent over there. It's a good thing she don't know of it."

Irma looked down into the waves, while the old man continued:

"And over there by the rock the trunk of a tree struck a woodcutter and hurled him into the lake. Over there by the flood-gate, a milkmaid, fifteen years old, happened to get into the current where the drift logs were whirling along, and by the time her body reached the lake, every bit of clothing had been torn from it by the logs."

"Don't tell such frightful stories," said the waiting-maid to the man.

Irma looked up at the steep mountains and asked:

"Could one climb up there?"

"Yes, but they'd find it mighty hard work; still, wherever there are trees, man can climb."

Irma looked down into the lake, and then up at the mountains. One can lose one's-self in the world. "How would it be if one were to do so?" said the voice within her.

She stood up in the boat. The old man exclaimed:

"Sit down! there's danger if you stir one way or the other."

"I shall not move," said Irma, and she really stood erect in the unsteady little boat.

"By your leave, the beautiful young lady surely doesn't mean to enter the convent?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I'd be sorry."

"Why would you be sorry? Don't the nuns lead a pleasant, peaceful life?"

"Oh, yes, they do; but it is a life in which nothing happens."

As if obeying a higher summons, Irma sat down and immediately stood up again. The boat reeled.

"A life in which nothing happens"—the words touched a chord in her own heart. With her, the pride and strength of youth rebelled against sacrificing one's life in such a manner. It is a life in which nothing happens: whether it be, like her father's, spent in solitary thought, or, like that of the nun's, in common devotion. Are we not placed upon earth so that we may call all our own—come joy, come grief; come mirth, come sadness—a life in which nothing happens is not for me.

Filled with such thoughts she stepped ashore and, while walking up the avenue of lindens that led to the convent, heard the boatman fastening his skiff by the chain.

She inquired for Sister Euphrosyne. The nuns were all at vespers. Irma also repaired to the chapel, in which the everlasting lamp was the only light. Although the service was over, the sisters were still kneeling on the floor. At last they arose, looking like so many ghostly figures stepping out from chaotic darkness.

Irma returned to the parlor, where the portress told her that she would not be allowed to speak to Emma that day, as the sisters were not permitted to receive any communication, or converse with any one, after vespers. Irma, in the mean while, was lodged in the convent.

It was a mild September night. Wrapped in her plaid, Irma sat out on the landing until a late hour. Her thoughts were lost in the illimitable. She scarcely knew what she was thinking of, and yet, as if wafted toward her on the air, she would now and then seem to hear the words: "A life in which nothing happens."

On the following morning, after early mass, Irma was permitted to visit her friend. She was frightened when she saw Emma, and yet it was the same mild counte-

nance, only terribly disfigured by the closely fitting hood that completely covered the hair and gave her face greater prominence.

After the first outburst of grief and sympathy that followed the recital of her sad affliction, Emma at last said to Irma, who had again and again pressed her to her heart:

"Your embraces are so passionate. I know you will never be able to learn humility. You cannot; it is not your nature. But you should acquire equanimity. You could never enter a convent, Irma, and never ought to; or you would long to return to the world. You must become a good wife, but do not imagine that your ideal will ever be realized. Our existence here is fragmentary and full of misery. Life here below is not intended to be beautiful and complete. But, Irma, take heed you do not attempt to loosen a barrier, or to overstep it. Draw back while you are still on this side!"

Emma did not mention the king's name. There was a long pause. Irma felt as if their present surroundings must stifle her.

Emma spoke of what had happened but a few weeks ago, as if decades had passed in the mean while. She discoursed to her friend the strength that lay in continuous devotion; how it lengthened the hours into years full of placid victory over the world. She felt happy that it was possible, even on earth, to lay aside one's name and memories, and lead an existence which, without one steep step, gradually led one to eternal bliss. Emma, however, complained that they would not allow her to take the veil, and resented it as tyranny that she was only permitted to remain as a serving sister without vows.

"It is right that you should not," exclaimed Irma; "I think Bronnen loves you, but he's a man who respects existing facts. His moral character would lead him to repress, rather than manifest, warm feeling toward an affianced bride. He deserves you. I don't say that you should now—How could you? How would he dare? You should remain your own mistress and, after you've spent a year or more in the convent, you may, with that excellent man, lead a life which, if void of transports,

will be none the less true and beautiful. All I can say to you now is: Don't fetter your future. No one should take a vow that binds him for life, that, on the very morrow, might seal his lips and make him a slave, a liar, a hypocrite or a deceiver, in his own eyes."

"Irma," exclaimed Emma, "what bad advice are you giving me. Is that the language used at court? Oh, forgive me for speaking to you so! It was the old Emma that did it; not I. Forgive me, I pray you, forgive me!"

She threw herself on her knees at Irma's feet.

"Stand up," said Irma, "I've nothing to forgive. I will speak more calmly. You see, dear Emma, it is fortunate for you that you cannot take the vow. A fearful blow has prostrated you; but if you remain free in your seclusion, your load will gradually lighten and your wounds will heal. Then, should the world call you, you are free to return to it. This should be a place of refuge for you, and not a prison."

"Ah yes," said Emma, with a smile, "you must of course think so, but I—I do not care to see the world again which no longer contains him who was dearer to me than life. You cannot realize what it is to be betrothed on earth, and be obliged to wait for eternal union in heaven. I have prayed God to take my heart from me and banish every selfish desire, and He has hearkened unto me. It is tyrannical to attempt to force our opinions upon others. Do you still remember, Irma, the first time we read the story of Odysseus, and how he had them bind him to the mast so that he might listen to the songs of the syrens and yet not be able to follow them? Do you still remember the remark you then made?"

"I've quite forgotten it."

"'Much-bepraised Odysseus,' said you, 'was a weakling, not a hero. A hero must not suffer himself to be bound by external fetters; he must resist everything by his inner strength.' Even then, I felt how strong you were. Odysseus was only a heathen and knew nothing of the eternal law. I rejoice in that law; I cling to that rock. I long for the divine, the eternal bond; it will support me if I sink. I do not wish to return to the world. I wish to fetter myself, and can it be that men who claim

to be free dare forbid others to tread the path that leads to perfection—to the true eternal life? Is not that tyrannical and godless?"

"Yes; but who forbids you?"

"The law of the state. It has ordered this convent to be closed and forbids its taking any more young nuns."

"And does the law say that?"

"Yes."

"The king shall not allow it."

Irma spoke so loudly that her words were echoed back from the vaulted ceiling of the cell.

Emma's glance was fastened on Irma—if it only could be brought about!

The two maidens had no time to exchange a word on the subject, for, at that moment, the abbess sent for them.

The abbess addressed Irma, just as if she had overheard the last words of the latter. With gentle voice, but positive manner, she complained of the tyranny of the free-thinkers—whom she did not judge, but simply pitied—and maintained that the attempt to destroy ancient and holy institutions was revolting.

Irma's countenance glowed with excitement. She again said that the law must be repealed, and that she would exert all her influence to bring about that end. She offered to write to the king at once. The abbess gladly accepted the proffered service and Irma wrote:

"*Your Majesty*: I write to you from the convent, but I am not a nun. I believe my talent does not lie in that way. But what laws are these that forbid a maiden from taking the eternal vow? Is that freedom? Is it justice? What is it? Your Majesty will, I trust, pardon my agitation. I am writing with convent ink on convent paper, and it is not the first time that such ink and such paper have been used in the service of freedom.

"Is it possible that one set of human beings can forbid others to live together in seclusion?"

"Quacks cannot create life or happiness; should they, therefore, be allowed to forbid unhappiness from effecting its own cure?"

"Your Majesty's great mind cannot suffer such bar-

barism, and it is barbarous, although hedged about by culture.

"I am aware, Your Majesty, that I have not yet made my meaning clear. I shall endeavor to do so.

"I am here in the convent.

"Emma, the woman whom I love above all others—I believe I have already spoken of her to Your Majesty—wishes to take the veil. From her point of view, she is in the right. Dogs will go mad, although the dog-tax be paid. A mad dog killed her affianced and she now desires to renounce the world. Who dare prevent it? And yet the law of the state commands that this convent shall die out, and forbids its receiving nuns.

"Your Majesty dare not permit this. Your eye takes in all at a glance; your life is the nation's history. You must teach these journeymen to be greater-minded than they now are. They must abolish this law; indeed, they must.

"Pardon my language, Your Majesty; but I cannot help myself. I feel as if I were your deputy. I feel that your great mind resents such pettiness as an insult.

"I hope to see Your Majesty soon again, and, meanwhile, send my most respectful greetings.

"IRMA VON WILDENORT."

Without being observed, Irma inclosed the four-petaled clover-leaf with the letter.

While Irma sat in the boat that took her back to the shore, she was filled with pride. She felt that she had instigated, if not accomplished, a beautiful and noble act in the service of freedom and was determined that it should be carried out.

The old boatman was glad to see her again. He rowed lustily, but did not speak a word. Now and then, he would smile to himself, as if happy in the thought that he was carrying a young soul away from the realm of shadows.

In the distance there was a skiff and, in it, a man clad in a green hunting dress. He waved his hat and bowed.

Absorbed in thought, Irma was gazing into the lake, when her maid drew her attention to the other boat.

Irma started.

"Is it not the king?"

Thinking that he had not yet been observed, the hunter fired off his gun, the report of which was echoed again and again from the hills. He then waved his hat once more. With trembling hand, Irma waved her white handkerchief as a token of recognition.

The skiff approached. Irma's expression rapidly changed from one of joy to that of disappointment.

It was not the king. It was Baron Schoning who greeted her.

He sprang into the boat, kissed her trembling hand and told her how happy he was to meet her there.

They alighted. The baron offered his arm to Irma and they walked along the bank, the maid going before. In the distance, Irma could see the lackey who, on the previous day, had been speaking to hers. Had not the servant said that his master had been waiting here for a long time? Had not Baron Schoning, before this, been open in his attentions to her? His words soon relieved her of all doubt on that score.

"We are alone here, in the presence only of the mountains, the lake and the heavens. Dearest Countess! May I speak of something that lies near my heart and which I have for a long while desired to tell you?"

She silently nodded assent.

"Well then, permit me to tell you that the court is not the right place for you."

"I am not quite sure that I shall return there; but why do you think me out of place there?"

"Because there is something in you which will always prevent you from feeling at home there. You are surprised to hear me, the jester, the court warbler, speak thus. I know very well I bear that title; but believe me, Countess, while they imagine they are playing with me, I am amusing myself at their expense. You, Countess, will never feel at home at court. You do not accept that life and its customs, as fixed and settled. You interpret it according to your own peculiar views; your mind cannot wear a uniform; your soul utters its deepest feelings in its own dialect, and when your utterances get abroad in the liveried world, they find it exceedingly original, but

strange and—no one knows it better than I—you have not, and never will have aught in common with those who surround you."

"I should not have believed that you could thus look into my heart; but I thank you."

"I am not looking into your heart; I live in it. Oh, Countess! Oh! thou child-like and all-loving heart, tremble not! Suffer me to clasp this hand in mine, while I tell you that I, too, am a stranger there, and have resolved to retire from court and live for myself on yonder patrimonial estate of mine. Irma, will you render my life a thousand-fold happier than it can otherwise be? Will you be my wife?"

It was long before Irma could answer him. At last she said:

"My friend—yes, my friend—on yonder island there lives a friend of mine who is dead, both to herself and me. Fate deals kindly with me and sends me another in her stead. I thank you—but—I am so confused—perhaps more than— But look, dear baron, at the little cottage half-way up the mountain. I would be content to live there—to grow my cabbages, milk my goats, plant my hemp, make my clothes—and could be happy, desiring nothing, forgetting the world and forgotten by it."

"You jest, dear Countess; you are creating an idea whose bright colors will soon grow dim."

"I do not jest. I could live alone while laboring for my daily bread, but not as the mistress of a castle and surrounded by the trifles and frippery of the fashionable world. To dress for the mere sake of seeing one's self in the glass, is not to my taste. In yonder cottage, I could live without a mirror. I need not look at myself, nor need another look at me; but if I am to live with the world, I must be wholly with it; at the reigning center, in the metropolis, or traveling. I must have all or nothing. Nothing else will make me happy. Nothing half-and-half or intermediate will satisfy me."

Irma's tone was so determined that the baron saw how thoroughly in earnest she was, and that her words meant more than mere caprice or sport.

"I must either subject myself to the world," said she,

"or, despising it, put it beneath me. I must either be perfectly indifferent and regardless of the impression I produce upon others, or else afraid of every glance, even my own."

The baron was silent, and evidently at a loss for words. At last he said:

"I would gladly have gone to your father's house, but I know that he dislikes men of my class. I waited for you here, knowing that you would come to your friend. Pray answer me another question: Do you intend to return to court?"

"Yes," said Irma, now, for the first time, firmly resolved upon returning. "It were ungrateful to act otherwise. Ungrateful to the queen and to—the king and all my friends. I feel sure, my friend, that I am not yet mature enough to lead a life in which nothing happens."

They came to a seat.

"Will you not sit down with me?" said Irma to the baron.

They seated themselves.

"When did you leave the capital?"

"Five days ago."

"And was everything going on as usual?"

"Alas, not everything. Doctor Gunther has met with a sad affliction. Professor Korn, his son-in-law, died suddenly, having poisoned himself while dissecting a corpse."

"While dissecting a corpse?" exclaimed Irma. "We all die of the poison of decay, but not so suddenly; those on yonder island and we—all of us."

"You are very bitter."

"Not at all. My head is filled with the strangest fancies. I became acquainted with a great law over there."

"The law of renunciation?"

"Oh, no; the justification of fashion."

"You are mocking."

"By no means. Fashion is the charter of human liberty and the journal of fashion is humanity's greatest boon."

"What an odd conceit!"

"Not at all. It is the simple truth. The frequency with which a man changes the material, cut and color of

his clothes, proves his claim to culture. It is man alone who constantly clothes himself differently and anew. The tree retains its bark, the animal its hide, and, as the national and clerical costumes are both stereotyped, as it were, those who use them are regarded as belonging to an inferior, or less civilized class."

The baron looked at Irma, wonderingly. He was glad at heart, that she had candidly given him the mitten. He could not have satisfied so restless and exacting a nature that constantly required intellectual fireworks for its amusement; and she, moreover, took delight in her absurd ways. All at once, he saw nothing but the shadows in Irma's character. An hour ago, he had seen only the bright side and had regarded her as a vision of light itself. She had just visited a friend about to take the veil, had just listened to a proposal of marriage—how could she possibly indulge in such strange notions immediately afterward?

Baron Schoning told her that he had ordered photographs of Walpurga and the prince.

"Ah, Walpurga," said Irma, as if suddenly remembering something.

The baron politely took his leave and rowed back across the lake.

Irma took the road that led homeward. She wished to visit Walpurga's relatives and inquired as to the route toward the lake on the other side of the mountains. They told her that a carriage could not get there, and that the only way to reach the point was on horseback. Irma took the direct road for home.

CHAPTER XII.

"SOMETHING ails me! It always seems as if some one were calling me, and I can't help looking round to see who it is. The countess must be thinking of us all the time. Ah me, she's the best creature in the world."

Whilst Walpurga, for many days, thus lamented Irma's departure, the others at the palace rarely thought of her.

The place we leave, be it to journey in this or to the other world, is speedily filled. In the palace, they tolerate neither vacancies nor sentiment. There, life is a part of history; and history, as we all know, never stands still.

Mademoiselle Kramer continued to teach Walpurga how to write, and the latter did not understand her, when she said: "The quality are fond of taking up all sorts of things, but we must finish what we begin. I've finished many a piece of embroidery, of which the hand that was kissed for it scarcely worked a couple of stitches; but that's in the order of things."

Although Mademoiselle Kramer found everything in order that was done by the quality, she, nevertheless, had a habit of speaking of such things to her inferiors, not with the hope of being understood by them, but merely to relieve her mind.

The child was well and hearty. Day after day passed in quiet routine, and now Walpurga was richly recompensed for the absence of Countess Irma. The queen was permitted to have the nurse and child about her for several hours every day.

While Irma had gone forth to seek rest and quiet, but had found chaos instead, the queen's life had become serene and happy. Her recent experience of life's trials had been a novel and difficult one; but now her mind was at rest, her health restored. She would look at her child and, when she spoke, Walpurga would fold her hands and listen in silence. The nurse did not understand all that was said, but, nevertheless, sympathized with what was going on. The queen endeavored to console Doctor Gunther in his affliction, and spoke to him of the consolation that the mother could find in her child: "In spite of all life's contradictions and enigmas," said she "there is yet the one glad thought that every child bears within it the possibility of the highest human development."

The queen while speaking looked around at her child, and Walpurga said in a gentle voice:

"Look at our child; it's laughing for the first time. It's seven weeks old to-day."

"I've seen my child's first smile, and its father is not here."

"Don't make such a long face," said Walpurga; "just keep on laughing and he'll laugh too; your pleasant glances will bide in his face."

The child kept smiling until the doctor requested them not to excite it any more. He said that Walpurga was right and that if one looks at an infant kindly it has the effect of imprinting a sweet expression upon its features.

From that day forward the child never saw a sad look on its mother's face.

It was only when she spoke of persons that Walpurga could talk volubly and continuously. Countess Irma was therefore frequently the topic of conversation. But this subject was soon exhausted, and when the queen would say: "Why are you silent? I hear that you can talk to the child so prettily and carry on all sorts of fun with him," Walpurga persistently remained silent.

The queen made Walpurga tell her her history. It required much questioning to get at the entire story for Walpurga could not narrate it in a continuous strain as she had never thought of her life as a connected whole. Everything had gone on of its own accord as it were and without requiring one to stop and think. While telling her story she was as anxious as if before a court of justice.

"How did you happen to fall in love with your husband? Do you love him with all your heart?"

"Of course. He's my husband and there isn't a bad drop of blood in him. He's a little awkward—I mean unhandy,—but only when others are about. He's never been much among people. He grew up in a one-storied house and until he was twenty-two years old had seen nothing but trees; but no work's too hard for him and whatever you put him to, he does his duty. He's not so dull, either; but he doesn't show it to the world; with me, he can talk well enough, and he's satisfied as long as I know he's the right sort of man. It takes my Hansei a long while to make up his mind, but when he's made it up, he's always right. You see, dear queen, I might have got a much cleverer husband; my playmate

has a hunter, and his comrade was after me for a long while; but I didn't want to have anything to do with him, for he's too much in love with himself. He once rowed over the lake with me, and was all the time looking at himself in the water, and twisting his mustache and making mouths, and so thought I to myself: If your clothes were made of gold, I wouldn't have you. And when father was drowned in the lake, Hansei was at hand and did everything about the house. He'd go out in his skiff and bring in fish, and while I and mother would sell 'em, he'd work in the forest. Father was also woodcutter and fisherman, at the same time. And so Hansei was there a full half year; no one bid him come and no one told him to go, for he was there and was honest and good and never gave me an unkind word; and so we were married, and, thank God, we're happy and, through our good prince, we'll have something of our own. We've got it already, and it's no easy matter for a husband to give his wife away for a year. But Hansei didn't waste many words over it. If a thing's right and must be, he only nods—this way—and then it's done. Forgive me, dear queen, for telling you all this silly stuff, but you asked me."

"No, I am heartily glad that there are simple-minded, happy beings in this world. The worldly-wise think they prove their infinite wisdom when they say: 'There are no simple-minded, happy people, and the country folk are not nearly so good as we imagine.'"

"No more they are," said Walpurga, eagerly; "there aren't any worse people than some of those out our way. There are good ones, of course; but there are wicked and envious and thieving and lazy and good-for-nothing and godless creatures besides; and Zenza and Thomas are among the worst, but I can't help it."

Walpurga imagined that the queen must know of the pardon, and they should not say of her that she had not told the truth. The queen felt grieved at Walpurga's vehemence and the serious charges she made against the people of her neighborhood.

After a little while, she said to Walpurga:

"They tell me you sing so beautifully. Sing something for me, or, rather, for the child."

"No, dear queen, I can't do it. I'd like to, but I can't. I don't know any but silly songs. The good ones are all church songs."

"Sing me one of those that you call silly songs."

"No, I can't; they're lonely songs."

"What do you mean by lonely songs?"

"I don't know, but that's what they call 'em."

"Ah, I understand: they can only be sung when one is solitary and alone."

"Yes, I suppose that's it; the queen's right."

Although the queen endeavored to induce her to sing, Walpurga protested that she could not and finally became so agitated that she burst into tears. The queen experienced some difficulty in pacifying her, but succeeded at last, and then Walpurga, taking the child with her, returned to her room.

On the following day Walpurga was again summoned to the queen, who said: "You're right, Walpurga. You can't sing to me. I've been thinking a great deal about you. The bird on the tree doesn't sing at one's bidding. Free nature cannot be directed by a baton. You needn't sing for me. I shall not ask it of you again."

Walpurga had intended to sing to the queen that day. She had chosen her prettiest songs and now the queen actually ordered her not to sing, and even compared her to a bird. "Palace folk," thought she, "are queer folk."

"I understand," continued the queen, "that in your neighborhood they believe in the Lady of the Lake. Do you believe in her, too?"

"Believe in her? I don't know, but they tell of her. Father saw her three days before he died, and that was a sure sign that he would soon die. They say, too, that she's the Lady of Waldeck."

"Who is the Lady of Waldeck?"

"She's the Lady of Wörth."

"What is Wörth?"

"A bit of land in the middle of the lake, with water all round it."

"Do you mean an island?"

"Yes, an island; we sometimes call it that, too."

"And what is the story of the Lady of Waldeck?"

"Once upon a time, many thousand years ago, there was a man, and he was a knight by the name of Waldeck, and he was a crusader. He and lots of emperors and kings went off to our Saviour's grave in the Holy Land. He left his wife at home and before he went away, he said to her: 'You're good and you'll remain true to me'; and when, after many years, he returned, quite black with the eastern sun, he found his wife with another man, and so he bound the two together, put them in a boat and rowed them over to Wörth where he left them; and there they lay and had nothing to eat, and nothing to drink, and were tied together and died of hunger, and the birds of the air ate them. They were adulterers and it served them right; but he was horrible for all. And even nowadays, on spirit nights, you can often see a little blue flame on the island of Wörth, and they say that the Lady of Waldeck's soul has passed into a nymph and that she must wander about."

Such was Walpurga's story.

"I haven't frightened you, I hope?" said she, anxiously, as she observed the queen's fixed gaze. "That's what they say. But may be it's only talk, after all."

"No, no. Don't be anxious about that," cried the queen. "So many different thoughts pass through my mind."

"Like enough; it's very hard to be the housewife, with so big a house as this to keep, and so many folk in it."

The queen laughed heartily.

Walpurga did not know that she had said anything odd or droll and was therefore surprised at the effect of her remarks; but she soon became satisfied that all she said was quoted. This made her quite shy, although she would now and then give way to fits of extravagance and would, at such moments, delight in her own odd freaks, for they always provoked a smile. While the queen aimed to be as simple as possible in her intercourse with Walpurga, the latter was, with each succeeding day, becoming more artificial and affected. She copied herself and her whilom *naïvete*. When she knew that the queen was within hearing, she would repeat the wondrous combination of words with which she was wont to amuse the

prince. She one day began to sing of her own accord and, when she had finished, she felt surprised and almost hurt, because her song had elicited no remark from the queen. Had she not sung well?

The queen had said nothing, because she feared that she might embarrass her.

There was a strange contrast between these two women, each of whom was trying to place herself in more perfect sympathy with the other, while both were, with every step, adding to the distance that separated them.

It was a great day when the queen, accompanied by Walpurga and the crown prince, rode out for the first time.

"You're a thousand times more beautiful when you're out-of-doors, in the open air. In the darkened rooms, I never knew how beautiful you were," said Walpurga to the queen, who immediately afterward had something to say in French to the Countess Brinkenstein who sat beside her.

"May I ask a favor, gracious queen?" said Walpurga.

"Certainly. What is it?"

"I think it hurts the child to talk gibberish before it. A young soul like his understands, even if it can't speak, and it seems to me it must confuse his little brain. I hardly know how to tell you; but I feel it in my own head, and whatever affects me, affects the child."

"She's right," said the queen to Countess Brinkenstein, "until the child can speak perfectly, it should hear no language but its mother tongue."

"That's it—mother tongue," exclaimed Walpurga, "you've hit it. I had it on my lips, but I couldn't think of it; that's the very word. I'm, so to say, the same as a mother to the child and so—isn't it so?"

"Yes, certainly. It shall be as you say in all things. See to it, my dear Brinkenstein, that after this, nothing but German be spoken before the prince. No one can tell what sounds may sink into the soul which, as yet, is but half awakened."

Walpurga was delighted. There would now be no more gibberish when she was by for wherever the child was, there was she.

Mademoiselle Kramer added to her happiness by informing her that they would start for the country, that is, the summer palace, within a few days.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN the mean while there was a special reason for detaining Walpurga and the prince in the city.

Baron Schoning had spoken of the matter, while at breakfast one day, and the suggestion which had been offered as a bit of pleasantry was well received. The millions who were anxious to behold their future ruler were to be gratified by the work of an instant. It was determined that there should be a photograph of the crown prince borne aloft on the hands of the people, Walpurga representing the people. She urged various objections to the idea, and said it was wrong to let a child less than a year old look into a mirror, and quite wrong to have its likeness taken. "As long as you haven't let a child look in the glass, it can see itself in the hollow of its left hand." Finding that her opposition was of no avail, she dressed herself in her best gown. The crown prince looked very pretty, and as he already had fair curly hair, the artist removed his cap.

The first few attempts to get the likeness were failures. Whenever she heard the voice issuing from the dark room, Walpurga was frightened and imagined that witchery was going on. She became more and more agitated, but at last, at Schoning's clever suggestion, a pianist in the adjoining room played the air of Walpurga's favorite song. As soon as she heard it, she could not help joining in the strain. Her expression—and that of the child, too—became cheerful and unconstrained. Eureka! the picture was a success.

The drives about the city had been lovely, but the most beautiful of all was now to come.

It was a bright, balmy afternoon when they drove off. Although there had been no rain for some time, the road was free from dust, sprinklers having preceded the court carriage.

Walpurga was in an open carriage, with the prince and the queen. It was the first time that she rode out among the villages and the fields. She gazed at the people who were looking out of the windows, or sitting at the door-steps of the houses by the roadside, at the children who would stop and salute them, and then, again, at the laborers in the fields. She kept smiling, nodding and winking in all directions. The queen asked:

"What ails you? What's the matter?"

"Oh, pardon me, queen; but here I'm riding in a carriage and four, and over there the likes of me are working and toiling, and I know how the women's backs ache from digging up potatoes, and while I ride by, as though I were somebody better than they, it makes me feel as if I ought to ask 'em all to forgive me for riding by in this way. I feel as if I ought to say: 'Never mind; when the year's over, I'll be the same as you are; the clothes I wear, the carriage and the horses, none of 'em are mine; they're all borrowed.' Ah, dear queen, forgive me for saying this to you, but you understand everything and know how to explain it for the best. I empty my whole heart out to you," said Walpurga, smiling.

"Yes, I understand what you mean," replied the queen; "and it is wise of you thus to look forward to a return to your home. The thought that you might be unable to content yourself there, has often troubled me. Believe me, we who ride in carriages are no better off than those who are walking barefoot through yonder stubble."

"I know it," said Walpurga. "No one can eat more than his fill, as my father used to say, and queens must bear their children in pain and sorrow, just like the rest of us; no one can save them from that."

The queen made no reply, and looked out of the other side of the carriage.

Countess Brinkenstein motioned Walpurga to be silent; for, while it was difficult to induce her to talk, when she had once begun, she did not know when to stop.

The queen was only silent because she wished to say something in French, to Countess Brinkenstein, and had refrained from doing so on account of Walpurga's precious admonition.

"My dear child," said the queen at last, "I would, gladly, give up everything, if I knew that I could thereby render mankind happy and contented. But what good would it do! Money wouldn't help the people, and it is not we who have brought about this inequality. God has ordained it thus."

Walpurga could easily have answered her, but thought it best to leave something for the morrow; for her father had often said: "It isn't well to catch all the fish in one day." She therefore remained silent.

The queen felt greatly constrained by her promise not to speak French in Walpurga's presence. There was much that she desired to say and with which the peasant woman had no concern.

"How beautiful! how lovely is the world," she murmured to herself, and then closed her eyes, as if fatigued with the splendor which had opened before them, after her long seclusion. And while she lay there, her head thrown back on the cushion, she looked like a sleeping angel, so peaceful, so tender, as if mother and child in one.

"The soft cushions almost make me think I am sitting on clouds," said Walpurga, when they reached their journey's end.

She was unspeakably happy in the country. The broad prospect, the clear skies, the mountains, the large and beautiful garden with its comfortable seats, the fountains, the swans—all delighted her. There was also a fine dairy-farm, about a quarter of a mile distant, where the cow-stable was much finer than the dancing floor at the Chamois inn.

Walpurga was out in the open air during the greater part of the day. The queen lived for her child alone, and Walpurga was again talkative and natural. All the affected ways that she had acquired while in the city, had left her.

In her first letter home—she could now write for herself—she said: "If I only had you here for one day, to tell you about everything; for, if the sky were nothing but paper and our lake nothing but ink, I couldn't write it all. If it were only not so far off, Hansei; a pound of

fish here costs twice as much as with us. We're living in the summer palace now, and just think, mother, what such a king has. He has seven palaces, and they're all furnished, every one with a hundred beds, rooms, kitchens and all of them filled, and when they go from one palace to another they needn't take a fork or a spoon along. Everything here is silver, and the doctor and the apothecary and the preacher and the court people and the horses and the carriages, all move out here with us. There's a whole town here in the palace, and I've the best beer and more than I care for; and when one gets up in the morning everything is as neat and clean as a new-laid egg. There's not a leaf on the paths, and then there's a house all made with glass. The flowers live in it; but I daren't go in, because it's too hot in there. They keep it heated the whole year round, and it's filled with great palms and other trees from the east, and, in the pond, there's a fountain, and the water rises up as high as our church steeple. And just think of all such a king can have. All day long, when the sun shines, there's a rainbow there, sometimes above and sometimes below. Of course, he nor no one else can make the sun; and they all do their best to please me. I hardly can say I like a thing, before they give it to me at once.

"The queen is just like a companion with me. Just like you, Stasi. I wish you much joy at your wedding. I only heard of it from Zenza. You shall have a wedding present from me; let me know what you'd like to have. But now I beg of you, just tell me how it goes with my child. It didn't please me to know that you had weighed it on the butcher's scales, and that it's so heavy. I wouldn't have thought, mother, that you would have allowed it, or that you, Hansei, would have given way to the innkeeper. Beware of that fellow. It was only last night that I dreamt you and he were rowing across the lake, and that he clutched you and dragged you into the water. Then all was over. And then the Lady of the Lake appeared, and she looked like the good countess who is now away. She's the best friend I have here, and promised to visit you on her way back. You can tell her and give her everything just as if it was myself. They've

just brought me my dinner. Ah, dear mother, if I could only give you some of it. There are so many good things here and there's always so much left. Don't let yourself want for anything, or Hansei either, and my child least of all, for we can now afford it, thank God! And I want to be with you for a long while yet, dear mother. It often makes me feel bad that I can't be a mother—I mean a true mother; but when I come home I'll make it all up to my child; and Hansei, put all your money out at interest until I get home; remember, it doesn't belong to us, but to our child, whom we deprive of its mother.

“Mademoiselle Kramer, who is with me all day, was born here. She'd rather be in the city, and she says it used to be much prettier here than it now is; that everything used to be like the little garden yonder, where there are walls and rooms with doors and windows, all made of shrubbery. It's all very pretty and I like to go there, but when I've been there a few minutes I am almost frightened to death: for I feel as if I and the trees were bewitched, and I get away as soon as I can. Mademoiselle Kramer is a very good person, but nothing is quite to her taste. She's been used all her life to riding and fine eating and sitting about; and mother, just think of what I have eaten here—live ice! People here are so clever they can preserve ice and make it up so that you can eat it. Yes, if that could satisfy one's appetite, there wouldn't be any hungry people with us in the winter, or even in the summer, further up the mountains. And mother, you once told me a fairy-tale about walls that have ears; but this is no fable, it's true and quite natural. They have speaking-trumpets running through the whole palace, and you can speak through them, and if I want anything in my room, all I've got to do is to go up to the wall and say so and in a minute it's there.

“This is a beautiful day and that makes me think that you have it as well as we, and that the same sun that shines on us here shines on you, too.

“The main business here is taking walks. Every one must take walks here. They call it taking exercise, so that they can get up their appetite and keep their limbs from getting stiff. They even take the horses out walk-

ing when there's nothing for them to do. Early in the morning, the grooms ride out a long way with them and then come home. I often wish the horses could only take me home for an hour. I often get homesick, but I am well and hearty and only hope it is the same with you. Your

“WALPURGA.

“Postscript.—Why haven't you mentioned a word about the little gold heart which my countess sent to my Burgei? And no one is to send me any more petitions, or to come to me. I won't receive another one. As long as I live, I'll be sorry for having anything to do with Zenza and Thomas; but perhaps it's all for the best and may be he's turned out better. Don't think hard of it, dear Hansei, but I beg you, once more, to have very little to do with the host of the Chamois. He's a rogue, and a dangerous one at that, but you needn't tell him that I say so, for I want the ill-will of no one. I send my love to all good friends. I must stop now, my hand is quite stiff with writing.

“Stop! I must begin again. I send you a picture of myself and my prince. It was taken in a sort of peep-show, before we came out here, and now, as long as the world lasts, the prince and I will always be together, and I'll be holding him in my arms. But I am still with you, dear Hansei, and you, dear mother, and, most of all, with my dear child that I bear in my heart where no one can look. Don't show the picture to any one.

“But, dear me! what good will it do if you don't show it? Mademoiselle Kramer tells me that they've made a hundred thousand pictures of me and the prince, and now I am hanging up in all the shops, and wherever I go they know me as well as the king and the queen, whose pictures hang next to mine. I feel as if I wanted no one ever to see me again, but when I think of it, it's really an honor after all. I am out in the world now, and must let them do what they please with me.

“But I shall ever be true to you, and I am at home nowhere but with you, and am always there in thought.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“**H**OW goes it, Walpurga?” asked Baum, one morning, when the nurse was looking out of the window of the ground floor.

“Oh, dear,” replied she, “this is a real paradise.”

“Indeed!”

“Could it be any finer in paradise? The people live without care and have nothing to do but eat and drink and laugh and go out walking.”

“You’re right there; but still it was finer in paradise, for there father Adam couldn’t covet another man’s wife, as his was the only one in the world.”

“What queer notions you have,” said Walpurga, laughing; and Baum, feeling flattered, added:

“In paradise they had no use for servants, no coachman, no cook, no house, no clothes. There were no boots to be cleaned, because there were none, and there were no coats and shirts to be woven, and sewed and mended.”

“You dreadful creature,” exclaimed Walpurga. She felt as if Baum’s words had almost torn the clothes from her; her face was crimson. Baum quickly answered:

“I’m sorry I look so dreadful in your eyes. In my eyes you’re so beautiful that I—” He was interrupted by a servant who called him away.

Walpurga quickly drew back into the room. She was angry at Baum. How could any one use such language to a married woman? “And yet,” thought she, with a self-complacent smile, “Baum’s a well-mannered person, after all; and why shouldn’t one crack a joke, now and then?” She looked in the large mirror for a moment and smiled.

“Yes, when Hansei sees you again, he’ll hardly know you; it’s the good living that does it. But I’ll say to myself every day: ‘It won’t last long; you’re only hired here for a while. But dancing’s pleasant, even if the dance doesn’t last long,’” said Walpurga, as if to console herself. All sort of dance tunes occurred to her and she kept humming them to the prince.

Walpurga roamed about-through the beautiful park as if in a dream. She imagined that the trees, the sky and the birds were all enchanted and in a strange world; that they would suddenly awaken and all would vanish. But everything went on in its quiet course, each day as beautiful as the one that preceded, like the sun rising anew every day, the flowers that are constantly giving forth their fragrance, or the spring that never ceases to flow.

Walpurga had a special liking for Mademoiselle Kramer's father, who was governor of the castle. He was a venerable man who raised lovely flowers in his little lodge, and she could talk to him as with her own father.

Walpurga was sitting out of doors for the greater part of the day. Mademoiselle Kramer was always with her and two servants within ready call. The queen would also often join them.

The queen had a beautiful snow-white setter of which the child was especially fond. Walpurga requested her to let the prince often have the dog, because it is well for a child to have a living animal about it.

"She is right," said the queen, addressing the court lady at her side; "animal life awakens human consciousness."

Walpurga stared at her in surprise. The queen had said she was right, but added words that she did not understand.

"Just look," said she to the queen, "how fond the bees are of our child. They won't hurt him—you needn't fear. The bee is the only creature that came out of paradise without being spoiled."

The queen manifested her pleasure at the manner in which Walpurga's thoughts were interwoven with tradition.

Walpurga observed that the queen had but little worldly wisdom and gave her the benefit of hers whenever opportunity presented itself.

"Do you know what that is?" she once asked, while they sat in the shrubbery.

"A tree."

"Yes, but do you know it's a sacred tree and that lightning doesn't strike where it grows?"

"No, I never knew that."

"And then of course, you don't know why. Now my mother told me all about it. The Virgin was once crossing a mountain and was caught in a fearful storm. So she stood under a great large hazel-tree and remained safe, and, because it had protected her she blessed it for all time. You can make magic wands from hazel twigs. The serpent-king dwells under the hazel-tree and, sometimes, under the weeping willow. Do you know why the weeping willow drops its branches so sadly?"

"No, I don't know that either. You're full of wisdom," said the queen, smiling.

"I'm not, but my mother is. I don't know half as much as she. She's very clever, and told me about the weeping willow. The rods with which they scourged our Saviour were made from the weeping willow, and ever since that time she droops her branches with shame."

Walpurga was quite happy to think that she could teach the queen something. She felt that she was quite a different being from all in the palace and that the queen was the only one who understood her. She was always happy and cheerful when with her and opened her whole heart to the queen. "You're quite a stranger in the world; you've never, in all your life, seen how the burghers and farmers sit in their rooms of an evening, what they eat, what they talk of, what they wish for, and what makes them happy or gives them pain. I once heard my father tell a story. It was about a prince and a princess who grew up as shepherds, and didn't know who they were until they were grown up, when they said to him: 'you're a prince,' and to her: 'you're a princess,' and they became right good and honest people. Of course they'd been out in the world, and had learned how people live and what they need. I only wish that we could send our prince out the same way. I think it would be good for him and the whole country, too. If servants are running after you all day long, it's just as if you were in a prison, the people form a living wall around you."

"We can all be honest and good," replied the queen.

"And make good men and women of our children," added Walpurga. "Do you know what I'd like? I'd

like, as long as I live, to take all trouble from you, and if sickness came to you, to be sick in your place."

"Yes that's very well; but let us be quiet now."

The queen was all happiness. She saw to the bottom of a simple peasant woman's heart, and into a new world that revealed itself to her in her child.

CHAPTER XV.

BAUM availed himself of every opportunity to speak with Walpurga. He was in deep affliction; his wife was seriously ill, and Walpurga endeavored to console him. In return, Baum lent a willing ear to all her complaints, for she had just heard from home, that Zenza denied all knowledge of the little golden heart that Countess Irma had sent to the child.

"Ah, and so your countess has a golden heart left to give away," said Baum in a mocking voice. "You ought to be glad to have such a friend."

"And so I am. Oh, if she were only here again, then it would be a real paradise. I don't worry about Zenza's making away with the golden heart; there must be some bad people, or else the world would be too beautiful."

"And I tell you, it's only half a life when the king's away. Just wait till he comes back and see how it will be then. When there's no man about, it isn't a complete house."

The queen approached and Baum withdrew.

"What was that man saying to you?" asked the queen.

"We were telling each other of our troubles; he has great longing for the king and I, dear queen, have great longing for my Countess Irma."

"I long for her, too; but she has asked to have her leave of absence extended for another fortnight."

Peacefully and calmly, the days passed by. Walpurga's favorite resort was in the neighborhood of the dairy-farm; for there were cows there, and cows are the same everywhere, and don't know that they belong to the king, or that their milk is served at his table.

Walpurga remarked this one day to Baum, who had discovered that he could meet her there, and he replied:

"Oh, how clever you are; if I only had got a wife like you."

"There are dozens like me."

"Oh, not so clever as you are. You could get far in the world, if you only wanted to."

"How far should I go?" said Walpurga. "I want to go home and no farther."

"No one will think the worse of you for that, but one can make a new home."

"I don't understand you."

"I can't explain now, Countess Brinkenstein is coming. Meet me in the shrubbery behind the chapel, this evening when they're all at table, I've something good to tell you."

Walpurga had not time to reply. Baum saw Countess Brinkenstein approaching and, in a loud voice, gave the dairy inspector an order from the head cook, and then walked away quickly, respectfully saluting the countess as he passed.

Countess Brinkenstein administered a severe reproof to Mademoiselle Kramer for having allowed Walpurga to stand there with the prince, and chatter with the servants.

Mademoiselle Kramer made no reply, and only motioned Walpurga to go into the vine-clad arbor.

Walpurga was busy conjecturing what sort of advice Baum might have to give her. He knew lots of things and perhaps knew of some clever stroke, by which Hansei, her mother and the child might be brought to the palace. But Hansei wouldn't do for a lackey. Perhaps, though, they could make him court fisherman or chief woodsman of the royal forest.

When evening came, she was quite uneasy. It was not the right thing for her to have a secret meeting with any man but her husband; but, perhaps the place may be given away to-morrow, and then it would be too late. She sat by the window and looked up at the stars. Her cheeks glowed, she drew a deep breath.

"What ails you?" inquired Mademoiselle Kramer.

"I feel so warm and oppressed."

"I'll send for the doctor."

"I don't need the doctor. Just let me sit here quietly."

But no; let me walk up and down in the garden for a few minutes and I'll feel better."

"The maid can go with you."

"No, I don't need any one; I'll feel better if I go alone."

"But, I beg of you, don't go too far, and come back soon. You've seen, to-day, how every misstep of yours draws reproof on me."

"Yes, I'll come back soon."

Walpurga went out at the back door. The gravel grated under her footsteps and she trod more lightly. The air was laden with the perfume of the flowers; the swans in the lake uttered a strange sound, like a deep, muffled trumpet tone; the sky sparkled with countless stars and, just as Walpurga looked up, she saw a brilliant meteor and exclaimed: "Hansei!"

In her innermost heart she wished for nothing but her husband's happiness. She stopped when she had uttered his name. She felt as if she had better return. She was a married woman and oughtn't to meet a strange man at night, even though it was by the chapel.

Something ran across the path. Was it a cat, a martin or a weasel?

"Return," said an inner voice, but she went on, nevertheless. She reached the arbor. Baum stepped forth from behind a vine-clad column. He held out both his hands to her and she offered him her own. He tried to draw her closer to him but she stood firm.

"What have you to tell me?" asked Walpurga.

"Nothing but what's good. You see, we lesser folks must help each other, and you're so much to me that I could do anything for you."

"If you can do me a good service, I shall be grateful as long as I live—I and my husband and my child. Tell me quick; I'm in a hurry."

"Then we can leave it for some other time."

"No, tell me now. What do you mean?"

"I really meant nothing at all, but you see we must always wait on others, and so I thought that we might have a quarter of an hour to ourselves. I only wanted to tell you that you are the light of my life, my happiness.

When I look at you, and listen to you, I'd like to do—I don't know what, and I can't tell."

"It isn't necessary, either; and let me tell you, this is very wicked of you."

"Is it wicked that I love you to distraction?"

"Yes, and doubly wicked that you fooled me here and made me believe that you had something good to tell me."

"And so I have," said Baum, quickly; "forgive me for what I've done; if you do, I'll tell you the rest."

"Yes, I'll forgive you, but make haste."

"Well," said Baum with great composure, "it's simply this. He who stands at the manger and doesn't eat, is a fool. Do you understand me?"

"Of course; it doesn't take much to know that."

"Yes, but you don't take my meaning. A court like this is a full manger, and you'll be a great fool if you go away without having taken enough to satisfy yourself and your child for life."

"I'd like to know how that can be done. You've got to eat every day, and can't stuff yourself with enough to last for a lifetime."

"You're clever, but you might be more so. Just listen! What I mean is this. A good position, or a profitable situation, should give one a chance to make himself comfortable for life. The tenant of the dairy-farm will have to leave next spring or, at the latest, in the fall, and I think you ought to manage it with the queen and the rest of them, so that your husband should get the position, and then you could be here all your life and you and yours would be well provided for. Take my word for it, I know what the quality are. If you leave here without having secured a good situation, not a cat will remember you. But if you remain here, you'll be well taken care of to the end of your days, and the older the prince gets, the more he'll think of you; and when he becomes king, he'll provide for you, your family, your child and even your grandchildren. Is that wicked advice?"

"No; on the contrary, it's very good and I'll remember it. That, indeed, would be bread and lots of butter."

"Oh, I've never seen or heard so sensible a woman as you are. You deserve a better lot; but that can't be

helped, and if you remain here, I'll often have the pleasure of seeing you and speaking a word with you, for I hope we'll be good friends; shall we not?"

"Yes, indeed, and my Hansei will also be a good friend to you. There's not a false drop of blood in his body and he's clever, too, only he's not much of a talker; and he loves me just as much as gold; he's true and kind-hearted, and I won't let any one say a word against him."

"I haven't said anything against him," replied Baum, and Walpurga was obliged to admit that this was the case; nevertheless, she could not help feeling that any offer of love to another man's wife is an insult to her husband, for it implies as plainly as words can express it: "He is not the right man, for he has such and such faults; I alone am worthy of you."

Sighing deeply, Baum answered:

"Oh, if one could only double his life."

"I should think one life was enough for any man."

"Certainly, if one hasn't wasted it. One can only live once, you know."

"Yes, in this world; but in the next it begins anew."

"I mean in this world, too. But it's very hard, let me tell you, if one's whole life has been wasted through a stupid blunder. Must one bear with it and make no attempt to change it? We've both of us blundered."

"Who?"

"While I was a soldier, I became acquainted with the valet of the late king. He was very fond of me and took great pleasure in helping me forward; but he well knew what he was about. I thought it a wonderful piece of luck, when I found I was to marry his daughter. It was only too late, when I discovered that she was sickly and irritable and without a healthy drop of blood in her body. And is my whole life to be wasted, because of this blunder? And is no love left for me in the world? And with you, it's just the same; with both of us, you and I—but why should it be too late, even now?"

"Pretty jokes, indeed! but they're not to my taste. It's wrong to talk about such things."

"I'm not joking. Are all of earth's joys to be lost to

us, just because we have once blundered? In that case, we'd be doubly fools."

"I see you're in earnest."

"Certainly I am," said Baum, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Very well, then. Just listen to what I've got to say. How can you dare insult my Hansei, that way? If it were so—and it isn't—but suppose it were; do you think, even if you were better looking or better mannered than my Hansei, and you're far from being that, let me tell you.—But that doesn't matter one way or the other. There's not a better man living than my Hansei, and even if there be one, he's nothing to me; we're husband and wife and belong to each other.—But it was only a joke, after all, wasn't it? and a mighty stupid one at that. Say that you only meant it for fun, for if I thought you were in earnest, I'd never speak another word to you; and now—Good-night."

"No, wait a moment. Now that I know how good you are, I think so much the more of you. If I only had a wife like you!"

Baum was greatly agitated. He had at first only dallied with kind words, but his voice had gradually assumed an agitated and touching tone.

"I'll give you something," said Walpurga, placing her hand on his shoulder.

"What is it; a kiss?"

"Get out! Don't talk so. You've just been behaving so well. Now I'll tell you something that my mother taught me. She always says, that he who is not contented with what he has, would be dissatisfied even if he had what he wished for."

"Did your mother tell you that?"

"Yes, and she knows many other good sayings, and I am glad that this one will be of use to you; it'll do you good."

"Of course—but now give me just one kiss, because I've been so good."

"What a foolish fellow you are," said Walpurga; "you say you're good, and, the very next minute, want something wicked as a reward. I'm a married woman and, if

you were to give me a whole palace with all that's in it and seven palaces besides, I'd not kiss any man but my husband. There, I'll shake hands with you—and now—good-night."

They parted, with a mutual promise to remain good friends.

Walpurga found Mademoiselle Kramer in great trouble. The child was crying, and would not be pacified until Walpurga sang to it.

Meanwhile, Baum returned to the palace. He bit his lips with vexation and thought to himself: What a simple, stupid creature such a peasant woman is. And she is beautiful; I can wait; I know the long road; she shall be tamed yet.

For many days, Walpurga would pass Baum without looking up, and he, too, seemed shy; but one day, when she was sitting on the bench, he quickly said while passing:

"You needn't be angry at me; I didn't know I'd offended you and, if I have, I ask your pardon."

Walpurga looked up as if relieved. Baum nodded to her and hurried away.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE king had returned from the baths. He was received with great ceremony, but he and the queen soon withdrew from the company and repaired to the crown prince's apartments. The parents, clasping hands, stood by the cradle of the sleeping child. Their glances rested upon each other and then upon the prince.

"Can there be a higher joy than thus to behold the babe whose life belongs to and is a part of our own?" softly whispered the queen.

The king embraced her.

The child awoke; his cheeks were glowing, his eyes were bright.

In the mean while, Walpurga had been sitting in a corner, weeping silently; but now she was obliged to go to the child. The king left; the queen remained with her.

"You've been crying?" asked the queen.

"It was for joy, nothing but joy. Could anything be more beautiful than the way you stood together there?"

"I'll have your husband come to you," replied the queen; "write him to come, and say that your mother and child may come too."

"Yes, dear queen, it would be very nice, but it would cost a pretty penny." Surprised that any one was obliged to deny himself a pleasure, because of the expense, the queen looked up and said:

"Go to the paymaster and get the money. Would a hundred florins be enough?"

"Oh! More than enough! But if the queen would give me the money, we could make better use of it."

The queen looked at Walpurga, as if shocked to think that, even in simple hearts, avarice can destroy the noblest emotions.

Walpurga observed the change in the queen's expression and said:

"I'll tell you, honestly, why I don't want it, even if it cost nothing. My husband's a good man, but he's just a little bit awkward, and it would grieve him to the heart if any one were to laugh at him. And it would be too much to expect of mother, for she's over sixty years old, and hasn't been out of the village since her wedding-day—that is, not farther than Hohenheiligen, three miles from our place, where she went on a pilgrimage. Though it would only be a day's journey, she hasn't even once gone home in all that time; and so I think it might do her harm if she were taken anywhere else, even it were only for a few days. The best thing would be if we could all of us remain near the king. I'm sure we'd take good care of the dairy-farm. My husband knows all about cattle; he was cowboy for many years, and, afterward, herdsman on the mountain meadows."

Walpurga spoke as if the queen knew all about the plan, but the queen was so possessed with the thought of her domestic happiness, that she did not hear a word of what was said.

Days passed by, and Walpurga, who had received none of the traveling money that the queen had promised her, did not venture to ask the court paymaster for it. De-

sirous of showing Baum that she was still on friendly terms with him, she told him what had happened.

"The best thing you can do," said he, with a shrewd air, "is not to take so small a gift. If you do, they'll think they've done with you; don't lose sight of the main chance, and that's the farm."

Walpurga was sincerely grateful to Baum. It was very fortunate, she thought, to have a friend at the palace, who, while the king was yet a prince, had traveled with him through Italy and France, and who knew how one ought to deal with such high folk.

The palace seemed to have thrown off its tranquil ways of the last few weeks. All was life and bustle. Sounds of laughter and of song could be heard from early morn until late at night. Gay colored lamps hung from the trees and, at night, the sparkling lights seemed, in the distance, as if part of a fairy-scene.

Early in the morning, wagons laden with provisions could be seen going hither and thither. To-day, the court would dine on some wooded height; to-morrow, in a ravine, or near a waterfall.

The king was all kindness and attention to his wife, and the queen had never seemed more lovely in his eyes, than now, elevated as she was by maternal happiness and conjugal affection.

In the apartments occupied by Walpurga and Made-moiselle Kramer, none of this bustle of preparation or departure was heard. They simply knew that "all had gone off, for the day."

In the morning, while the day was still young, and in the evening, while the soft dews were falling, the king and queen, arm in arm, might often have been seen sauntering in the park, and at such times the ladies and gentlemen would remain near the palace.

One evening, while the king and queen were thus walking together, engaged in familiar conversation, the queen said:

"How delightful it is to be thus leaning on your arm; to close one's eyes and be led by you. You can't imagine what good it does me."

Although the king expressed himself delighted with her

devotion, an inner voice told him that such sensibility was unqueenly. How differently—

No, he would not permit himself to think of it.

The queen had much to tell him of the gradual dawning of sense in the prince. He listened attentively, but rather through politeness than sympathy. After the first week, the queen excused herself from taking part in the frequent excursions, for she found no pleasure in all the bustle.

The queen had Walpurga and the child with her, either in the park or on the rising ground behind the palace, where she would sketch groups of trees, the lake and the swans, the castle, the chapel, and various distant views.

One morning, while at breakfast, the king said:

"What charming rivalry it was when you and Countess Irma were drawing together. Your dispositions were both illustrated by the way in which you treated the same subjects."

"Yes, we often remarked that. Perhaps I worked in the details more correctly and sharply, while Countess Irma sketched with far greater ease and freedom. I greatly miss the dear countess."

"Then let us write to her and tell her that she must return, and that at once. Let us send her a joint letter. Ladies and gentleman, we shall now, all of us, write a letter to Countess Irma."

"Order the writing materials to be brought," said he to one of the gentlemen in waiting. His request was speedily complied with and he wrote:

"Beautiful Countess! Fugitive bird! At last I know what bird you are:—The wild dove. Does this contradiction describe you? Wild, and yet a dove? Come, do come to us; your forest companions hang their heads because of your absence. Hasten to us, on wings of song."

The king offered the sheet to the queen and said: "What will you write?"

"I can't write when any one is present," replied the queen. "I can't write a word now; I shall send her a separate letter."

An almost imperceptible expression of displeasure passed over the king's countenance, but he subdued it.

"As you please," said he courteously, although, at heart, angry at this everlasting sentimentalism.

The courtiers and ladies all wrote, each adding a few lines of a light, jesting character.

Countess Brinkenstein, however, had slipped away.

Amid jests and laughter, the whole sheet was at last filled, and then the king said:

"The chief one is still missing. Walpurga must also write to the countess, for the voice of the people has most influence with her. Send Walpurga here."

Baum was at once sent to bring Walpurga. On the way, he explained to her what was going on. Walpurga was not shy, in the midst of the assembled court.

"Would you rather be alone in your room while you write?" asked the king, betraying his vexation, in spite of himself.

"I'll write wherever you want me to, but I can't do it well."

Walpurga seated herself and wrote:

"If your noble father will allow it, I shall be heartily glad when my dear Countess Irma is here again. My heart longs for her.

"WALPURGA ANDERMATTEN."

The king, having read it, said: "Write also—'it will do me and the prince much good to have you here again. You make us both happier'."

"Dear king," said Walpurga, "how clever you are. What you say is quite true. Now be so kind as to dictate it to me. I can't put it into such good words, but I can write quite well from dictation. I learned it from Mademoiselle Kramer. I used to know how at school, but forgot it afterward."

"No," replied the king, "write as your feelings prompt you. Ladies and gentlemen, let us leave Walpurga alone, and go to the veranda."

Walpurga was sitting alone, in the great breakfast-room, biting the end of her pen and vainly endeavoring to remember the king's words. Suddenly she heard a slight

noise near her and, looking up, saw Baum who was standing in the doorway.

"Come here," she exclaimed, "you can help me, for you must have heard it all."

"Certainly," replied Baum and dictated the king's words to Walpurga. She went out and handed the letter to the king.

He praised her for having put the words so nicely. She was about to say that Baum had helped her, but one need not tell everything, and why not receive praise for what might have been?

When Walpurga returned to her room, she smiled at her own shrewdness. The king would now surely give her the farm, for he had seen that she could write down everything and could keep accounts.

The queen came into the garden with her hastily written note.

It was unsealed. She gave it to the king saying:

"Will you read it?"

"It isn't necessary," said the king, closing the letter.

After the letter was written there was endless tittering among the court ladies. They chirruped and chattered and teased each other, and hopped about like a flock of sparrows that have just discovered an open sack of corn. They soon scattered, and ladies who at other times could not endure each other were now good friends and, arm in arm, would walk up and down the park, while others would stand gathered in little groups. All seemed loth to separate. They had so much to tell each other that none seemed willing to leave. They all spoke kindly of Irma. Every one was still her best friend, but, nevertheless, careful to leave a loophole of escape open, for things might change.

Within a few days, a great change had come over the feelings of all at the summer palace. The king and queen had, at first, greeted each other as if newly married, as if unspeakably happy; but, soon afterward, came the first distinct sense of uncongeniality which, in a word, betokened that the king wearied of the queen. He did full justice to her noble and exalted appearance. Her every word and thought was an outgush of purest emotion,

But this exaltation of feeling, which, to an every-day world, appears strange and incomprehensible and yet exacts constant consideration for its peculiarities; this endeavor to give intense and exhaustive thought to every casual subject; this utter absence of all cheerful or sportive traits; this cathedral-like solemnity of character; this constant dwelling on the heights: though beautiful and engaging at times, had become monotonous and distasteful to the king. The queen's conversation lacked that sparkling effervescence which, though it be only for a moment, charms and animates the listener.

The king who was fond of change, delighted in what was sportive, capricious, or enigmatical in character, and in the conquering of difficulties.

The remembrance of Irma supplied all that he missed in the queen. He felt sure of his faithful love for his wife, but admired the frank and lovely disposition of Irma, and why should he not, therefore, enjoy her society?

"She will come and remain with us, and bring new and fresh life with her," thought he to himself when he saw the courier who bore the letter to Irma, hurrying along the road.

In the afternoon, the king and queen drove out together; he sat at her side and held the reins. Their only attendants were the two grooms who followed on horseback.

The king was quite amiable; the queen happy. He felt inwardly conscious of having, in ever so slight a degree, swerved from the right path, and this made him doubly affectionate. With a frank gaze, he looked into the brightly beaming eyes of his beautiful wife.

Thus should it ever be. Thus, purely and frankly, shouldst thou ever be able to look into those eyes.

CHAPTER XVII.

"YOUR MAJESTY," said Countess Brinkenstein, on the following morning when they were sauntering in the park, "I owe you an explanation for not having signed the letter to the queen's maid of honor."

"You did not?" replied the king.

The rigid yet refined features of the old lady showed no change at these words, although she might have felt wounded at the intimation that the absence of her signature had not been remarked. But, in all things, she obeyed the highest law of the courtier; that is, to repress all personal feeling and thus avoid all sensitiveness. Couching her censure in terms of praise, in according with courtly fashion, she calmly added:

"The idea of the invitation was quite original, but genius must ever stand alone. Your Majesty has often honored me by addressing me as your motherly friend and, as such, you will, I trust, permit me to remark that it does not become either the gentlemen or the ladies to put their names to an extraordinary jest of Your Majesty's. There should not be the slightest cause for suspicion that this invitation was designedly open and informal, because secretly intended and wished for."

The king looked at the old lady in surprise, but acted as if unconscious of her having seen through his disguise.

"I must again tell you, my lady, that you ought to have gone to the baths. You take such somber and serious views of everything; but when one has been at the baths, as I have, everything looks gay and happy."

"Your Majesty, it is simply my duty to emphasize the rules that govern Your Majesty's high position."

"Are you not overdoing it?"

"Your Majesty, etiquette, although invisible, is none the less valuable. Treasures of artistic and great historical value are not melted over to make new coins, but are carefully handed down from century to century. The palace is the highest point in the land, where one is in full view of all, and where we should so live that we can afford to have all our actions seen."

The king was listless, for his mind wandered to Irma, who must now be receiving the letter. "She has awakened," thought he, "and is standing alone, or sitting beside her misanthropic father, on the balcony of the mountain castle. The letter comes, and she feels as if surrounded by a flock of chirruping, singing birds, that alight

on her hands, her shoulders and her head. What a pity that one cannot behold her charming smile!"

The king's vision had been a true one. Irma was sitting beside her father and dreamily gazing into the distance. What was to become of her? If her father would only say: "You must stay here." But this being obliged to decide for herself was the trouble. If she had a husband to command her—but Baron Schoning would have been her subject, and that would have made life's load a doubled one. At that moment, the housekeeper announced a messenger who had just arrived on horseback.

The courier entered, delivered his letter and said that he would await an answer. Irma read it and laughed aloud. She laid the letter on her lap, took it up again, and read and laughed again. Her father looked at her in surprise.

"What's the matter?"

"Read this."

The father read it; his expression did not change in the least.

"What do you mean to do?" he asked.

"I think I must obey such requests; but can I return without incurring your reproof?"

"Always; if there be nothing in your own heart to reprove you."

Irma rang for the housekeeper and told her to order the maid to make the necessary preparations for her departure; she also ordered them to treat the courier with hospitality, and to inform him that a part of the journey was to be accomplished the same evening. "Are you angry at me, father?"

"I am never angry. I am only sorry that so few persons allow their reason to guide them. But be calm, my child. If your resolve is dictated by reason you must follow it and bear the consequences calmly, just as I do. But let us spend the few hours yet left us, in peace and quiet; life lies in the present."

Irma gave many instructions to her maid and the courier, although it always seemed to her as if she were forgetting something which would not occur to her until after she had left.

Father and daughter were still at dinner. The carriage, laden with the luggage, had been sent forward a short distance to await them in the valley. The father accompanied Irma down the mountain. He spoke with her in a cheerful strain. While passing the apple-tree, on the way, he said:

"My child, let us take leave of each other here. This is the tree that I planted on the day you were born. It often marks the limit of my evening walk."

They stood there in silence. An apple fell from the tree and struck the ground at their feet. The father picked it up and gave it to his daughter.

"Take this fruit of your native soil with you. The apple falls from the tree because it is ripe, and because the tree has nothing more to give it. In the same way, man leaves home and kindred; but a human being is more than the fruit of the tree. And now, my child, take off your hat, and let me once more place my hands upon your head. No one knows when his hour will come. Nay, my child, do not weep. Nay, weep; and may you, through life, only have to weep for others, but never for yourself." His voice faltered, but, recovering himself, he continued:

"And just as I now rest my hands upon your head and would fain place them on all your thoughts, do you ever remain true unto yourself. I would like to give you all my thoughts, but, for the present, keep this one in your memory: Indulge in no pleasures but those which you can remember with pleasure. Take this kiss—you kiss passionately—may you never give a kiss in which your soul is less pure than at this moment. Farewell!"

The father turned away and walked up the mountain road. He did not look back again.

Irma looked after him, trembling and feeling as if something drew her toward home and bade her remain there forever. But she felt ashamed of her indecision; she thought of the next hour and of how strange it would seem to the servants and to her father, to see her trunks unpacked and all the preparation for the journey undone. No, it was too late, and she went on. She seated herself in the carriage and was soon on her journey. She

was no longer her own mistress; a strange power had taken possession of her.

It was on the following day, at noon, that Irma reached the summer palace. All was quiet; no one came to meet her but the old steward, who hurriedly laid aside his long pipe.

"Where are their highnesses?" asked the courier.

"They dine at the Devil's Pulpit to-day."

From the garden, there resounded a cry.

"Oh, my countess! My countess is here!" exclaimed Walpurga, kissing Irma's hands and weeping for joy.

"Now we'll have sunshine! Now we'll have day!"

Irma quieted the excited woman, who said:

"I'll go and tell the queen at once. She's the only one at home, and is up on yonder hill, painting; she doesn't care to go on these holiday excursions, and here every day seems a holiday."

Irma instructed Walpurga not to tell the queen, and said that she would join her. She went to her room and sat there for a long while, buried in thought. She felt as if she had extended a friendly hand and that no one had clasped it in return.

In the hallway, they were moving trunks about. Suddenly, she thought of the time when she sat in her room, an orphan child, clad in black, and heard them moving her mother's coffin about in the adjoining apartment.

Why had it occurred to her at that moment? She arose—she could no longer endure being alone. She hastily changed her dress and went to the queen.

The queen saw her coming and advanced to meet her.

Irma bent low and made an effort to kiss her hand.

The queen held her up and, embracing her, imprinted a tender kiss upon her lips.

"You're the only one who dare touch the lips that my father has kissed," said Irma—that is, she did not say it aloud, but simply moved her lips as if forming the words. Deep within her soul, arose a thought: I'd rather die a thousand deaths, than sadden that guileless heart.

The thought illumined her countenance with a noble expression, and the queen, all delight, exclaimed:

"Oh how beautiful, how radiant you are, Countess Irma!"

Irma dropped her eyes and knelt down beside the child's cradle. Her eyes were so lustrous that the child put out its hand as if to seize them.

"He's right," said Walpurga, "he tries to catch the light already, but I think your eyes have grown larger than they used to be."

Irma went with Walpurga and excused herself for not having visited the cottage by the lake. She then told her of her friend in the convent.

"And how's your father?" asked Walpurga.

Irma was startled. The queen had not even inquired about her father. Walpurga was the only one who had asked about him.

She told her that he knew her mother, and also her uncle, who often burnt pitch in the forest.

"Yes, he's my mother's brother; so you know him, too?"

"I don't, but my father does."

Walpurga told her about her uncle Peter, who was known as the "little pitchman," and vowed that she would send him something, one of these days, for the poor old fellow had a hard time of it in this world. Old Zenza had had the courage to come to the palace, but the little pitchman would starve to death before he would do such a thing.

While Walpurga was speaking, the queen went to the cradle, and when the prince saw her, he struggled, with hands and feet, as if trying to get to her. She bent down and raised him up, and Walpurga exclaimed:

"Dear me! on the very day our countess returns, our prince sits up for the first time. Yes, she can make everything go right."

The queen and Irma remained together in cheerful and unconstrained conversation. In the evening, there were joyful greetings on the part of those who had returned from the excursion to the Devil's Pulpit. Irma now, for the first time, learned that her brother was not at court. While at the baths, he had made the acquaintance of Baroness Steigeneck and her daughter and was now visiting them.

The king's greeting of Irma was quite formal. Even Countess Brinkenstein could have found nothing to object to in it; but how could he well have done otherwise, when the queen said:

"I can't tell you how happy our dear countess's return has made me; we've already spent several delightful hours together."

In the evening, there were fireworks which the king had ordered to be prepared in honor of Irma's arrival. Far and near, the people were looking at the lights and the gay-colored sheets of fire ascending heavenward. At last, Countess Irma's name stood forth in letters of fire, held aloft by mountaineers. The flame crackled, and, from behind the shrubbery, there issued strains of music which were echoed back from the distance. In the midst of all this noise and splendor, Irma was ever asking herself: "How fares it now with your father?"

Count Eberhard, in his mountain castle, was sitting by the window and, looking out into the starry night, said to himself: "Just as the stars above are separate and distinct from each other, so is every human soul solitary and alone. Each travels in its own orbit, its course determined by the attraction and repulsion of the heavenly bodies that environ it."

That night, Irma dreamt that a star descended from heaven and fell upon her bosom. She tried to grasp it, but it eluded her and transformed itself into a human figure which, with averted glance, exclaimed: "Thou, too, art solitary."

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

HANSEI was looking out of the window, holding his pipe with both hands and smoking away, while the morning passed. Near by, a day-laborer was cutting a load of wood. Hansei looked on, calmly nodding approval when the woodcutter made a clever stroke and, like a true judge, smiling at the awkward fellow when an obstinate branch would oblige him to turn it again and again before he succeeded in chopping it up. The grandmother was carrying the chopped wood into the shed at the gable end of the house and was there piling it up. Every time she passed, she would look at Hansei, who did not stir. At last, with an armful of wood, she stopped before him and said:

‘Well?’

‘Of course,’ he replied and puffed on. The grandmother’s exclamation had meant: ‘What’s this? Are you only here to look on? Can’t you, at least, pile up the cut wood?’

Hansei had fully understood her and had answered as if to say: ‘Of course I shan’t help; I don’t feel a mind to.’

The grandmother was about to throw down the armful of wood before his very face, but she reflected that the day-laborer outside need not see that. She carried the wood into the shed and then went into the room and said:

‘Look here, Hansei! I’ve got something to tell you.’

‘I can hear you,’ he replied, still looking out of the window.

‘I don’t know what to make of you. What’s got into you?’

Hansei did not deem it necessary to make any reply, but went on smoking while the grandmother continued:

"It's shame enough that you have the wood brought to the house, instead of going and getting it yourself. You're a woodcutter, and yet you must have another come and cut your wood for you. Such a thing never happened before. As long as this house stands, the axe-handle has never grown warm in the hands of a stranger. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"There's no need of my doing it," replied Hansei.

"Very well, I suppose you know your needs, better than I do," cried the old woman, angrily; "but I'll not scold. Do just as you please; let yourself and everything else go to ruin. As you make your bed, so you'll have to lie on it. Oh, if Walpurga knew of this! She's gone away among strangers, for our sake, while you—"

"There! I've had enough of it," said Hansei, closing the window and turning round. "Mother-in-law, I don't interfere in anything; I let you manage just as you please, and so I don't mean to let anybody interfere with me."

"I don't want to interfere with you. You're father and husband."

"A fine husband, indeed, whose wife leaves him for a year."

"Perhaps she's having a harder time of it than you."

"May be so; but she has pleasure and enjoyment, and what have I? I wander about as if lost, and that's why I'm not ashamed. The best thing left me is the tavern. One can feel at home there, when he can't in his own house. I don't need to cut or haul wood any longer, and I want to have some good of my wife's being—"

Hansei could not finish what he was about to say, for, at that moment, the door opened and Zenza entered.

"What are you doing here? Who sent for you?" inquired the grandmother of Zenza, who replied:

"Good-morning to you—I didn't come to see you; I want to see this man. Who's master here? you or he?"

"Speak out; what's the matter?" said Hansei, winking at his mother-in-law.

"I was to bring you the smith's compliments and tell you that the gun's ready for you, at his workshop."

"And so you're going to be a sportsman?" inquired the grandmother; "are you going a-hunting?"

"I suppose I'll have to go if you don't carry me," replied Hansei, laughing loudly at his joke.

The grandmother left the room, slamming the door after her. As nimbly as a cat, Zenza sprang toward Hansei and said:

"She'll wait for you up there, at dusk." Then, in a loud voice, she added: "God keep you, Hansei," and left the house.

The grandmother went out to the woodcutter and told him that he mustn't think they were used to having such wicked people as Zenza come to the house; but that, no matter how often they forbade her coming, she would force herself upon them, in order to show her gratitude for Walpurga's having procured the pardon of her son Thomas. It had been a foolish action; for Red Thomas would have been much better taken care of under lock and key. But Walpurga had meant it for the best. The woodcutter was satisfied; he well knew that it was a respectable house, and it was quite by accident that he remarked: "I wonder why Zenza's without Black Esther. They're generally together in the daytime."

The grandmother's eyes flashed when she heard his words. She bent down hurriedly, took up an armful of wood and carried it up to the house. When she reached the gable side, she found Hansei there, piling up the wood and whistling cheerfully. The grandmother kept on carrying wood, while Hansei piled it up, neither of them speaking a word. At noon, Hansei paid the woodcutter and said: "I'll cut the rest myself; you needn't come to-morrow."

"He's a good fellow, after all," thought the grandmother to herself. "He don't like to give in, in so many words, but afterward he does what you tell him, for all. He soon finds out what's right."

After dinner she brought the child to him and said:

"Just look here! Just feel! There's a tooth coming already. It's very soon, but it was just the same way with your wife. Just see how it puts its little hands in its mouth. God be praised that our child is thriving so nicely! Since you've been using hay for fodder, and since it's been getting the new cow's milk, you can see

the child growing before your very eyes. If Walpurga could only see it, just for an hour. Take it; I'll give it to you carefully. See, it's laughing at you. It knows you. Ah, dear me! but it doesn't know its mother yet."

"I can't take the child on my arms; I'm afraid I'd hurt it," replied Hansei.

The grandmother felt like saying: "If you let yourself go to ruin, you'll surely harm the child—" but checked herself. When a man is getting back into the right road, it isn't well to keep preaching at him. Let him go on quietly in his own way, or else he will lose all pleasure in it.—Thus thought the grandmother to herself, and, although she had already opened her lips to speak, she swallowed her words.

Hansei looked about him, with an unsteady glance, and said:

"Mother-in-law, you were going to say something else."

"There's no need of saying everything. But yes!—you lower yourself when you let Zenza bring messages to you. I noticed the woodcutter making a queer face when he saw that Zenza was allowed to enter our house. Don't go to the Windenreuthe; the place has a bad name, and it does no one credit to go there. If you do want to go hunting, and have bought yourself a gun, you can give a boy a penny to go there and and get it for you."

"Yes, indeed," thought Hansei, smiling, "grandmother's right; but one needn't tell all one's thoughts."

"I'm going into the forest now. I want to be about when they load up my wood."

He took his hat and mountain-staff, donned his hunter's pouch and provided himself with a piece of bread. The grandmother, carrying the child on her arm, accompanied him as far as the cherry-tree, from which the withered leaves were already beginning to fall.

Hansei went into the forest; but, as soon as he was out of sight, he turned about and took the road that led to Windenreuthe.

He felt quite strangely while on his way. He had never before known that he breathed so hard and was so easily frightened. He was terrified by every sound, by the nutpecker flying from the tree, the chattering magpie,

the hooting hawk-owl on the rocky ridge, and the bellowing cow in the meadow.

"I oughtn't to go, and I won't go," he exclaimed, bringing his staff down with such force that the pointed ferrule struck sparks from the stones in the road, and yet he went on.

Fortunately, a mist was ascending the mountain, but he walked on, farther and farther, through the clouds.

Windendreuthe consists of a few poor-looking, scattered houses. Hansei stopped in front of the first house, as if riveted to the spot. He was seized with fright as sudden as if a bullet had struck him, and yet what had alarmed him was nothing, after all. He had merely heard a child crying in the house before which he stood. "Your child cries just like this one," said an inner voice. "How will you be, when you see it and hear it and kiss it again? How will you be, when you pass this house on your way back. . . . How will you be, in the spring, when your wife returns and you walk with her and meet Black Esther? And at every merry-making, either at home or at the inn, Black Esther will come and say: 'Make room for me; I belong here too.'"

Hansei's brain reeled. He looked into the future—days and years passed before him in an instant. And yet he went on. Indeed, he snapped his fingers and said to himself: "You're a foolish fellow; a perfect simpleton; you haven't a bit of courage. Other people are merry and lead a happy life, and don't care a deuce about it and—what jolly stories the innkeeper tells of such and such a one, and what pranks the hunters tell of. . . . To enjoy all you can and lead a loose life into the bargain, does one credit with those who're not obliged to earn a living."

He removed his hat; his head seemed as if burning. He put his hat on again, pressing it down over his eyes, and went on through the dreary village.

Night had come on. Zenza lived in a so-called herb-hut, in the woods and at some distance from the village. It was there that her deceased husband had distilled brandy from various herbs, but principally of gentian. His master-wort was still noted.

The light from a large fire shone through the open door of the hut. At that moment, some one came to the threshold and leaned against the doorpost. She was full of wild beauty and power. Behind her, the flames were brightly burning. Hansei was now quite free from the fear he had experienced on the night when he still believed in the fabled forest-sprites. The figure now placed its hand to its cheek and uttered a shrill shout, which might be compared to a tone-rocket ascending on high and then bursting into all sorts of carols. Hansei trembled, and then he heard Zenza say:

"You needn't shout so. Don't scream to the whole world that you're at home. Wait till the horse is in the stable—"

"Hallo!" thought Hansei to himself, while he stood there, trembling, "she means to make a prisoner of you, and will drag every kreutzer from your pocket, if you act meanly or badly with her. . . . She'll make a beggar of you, and disgrace you in the bargain. No, you shan't rob me of my money. I won't put myself in your clutches. I'll do no such thing. You shan't have a right to stand up before my wife, and look her in the face and talk to her, while I'll have to thank you, in the bargain, if you don't do it. No, a thousand times no. I won't be wicked. I'd rather—"

As if pursued by an enemy, Hansei hurried back with mighty strides, and the unbarked oaken staff which he held with both hands served to support him in his flight. It was long since he had bounded down the rocks with such energy and rapidity. He again passed the house where he heard the child crying. It had not yet been hushed, but he who heard it was a different man from what he had been a little while ago. He hurried on as if pursued. The perspiration trickled down his cheeks and dropped on his hands, but he did not once stop. He felt as if Zenza, Black Esther and Red Thomas had followed and overtaken him, and were tearing the clothes from his body. It was not until he had gone far into the forest, that he ventured to sit down on the stump of a tree. He felt as tired as if he had been running ten miles. He rested his hands on his naked knees, and it

seemed as if they were grasping a strange body. He touched the stockings that Walpurga had knit for him, and the first word that left his lips was: "Walpurga, I've only once trodden such a path. It shall never happen again. I swear it, Walpurga," and taking the last letter he had received from her out of his pocket, he said: "I put your letter in my shoe, and these feet shall never tread the path of evil again. Thank God! I've only been wicked in thought." He took off his shoe, placed the letter in it, and had just stood up again, when he once more heard the loud shout issuing from Zenza's house.

"Scream on, as long as you've a mind to," said he to himself, while he went farther into the wood. He tried to light his pipe, but always struck his fingers with the steel; and, besides, his tinder was damp. "You don't need any fire, you wicked fellow," said he at last, while he put the pipe into his pocket. "You don't need fire; there's one burning up there, that would have been hell-fire for you. You may be right glad that you're out of it; it's more than you deserve."

If Hansei, at that moment, could have laid hands on the Hansei of an hour ago he would have strangled him.

The mist had become so thick that it was almost like a drizzling rain. The forest seemed to be growing vaster, and a path was nowhere to be found.

"You've lost your way, and it serves you right," said Hansei, speaking to himself. "You're no longer fit to be with decent men, you good-for-nothing wretch. It's only a pity that your wife and child are innocent sufferers by it—"

Two men in one were lost in the mist. Hansei cursed and swore at himself, but soon grew frightened, for his mind became filled with stories of the evil spirits that lead the solitary traveler up and down hill, and round and about, through the livelong night. He was about to turn back. It would be easier to find the way to Windenreuthe.

"Wait, you accursed devil," said he, addressing the invisible companion who had thus advised him; "all you want is to get me back there again. No, you shan't catch me."

He again tried to strike a light and, this time, with success. Just as he drew the first puff, he heard the tones of the bell, and pressed his hand to his forehead, for it seemed to him as if the clapper of the bell were striking against his head.

"That's the vesper bell of the chapel by the lake. The sounds seem so near. Can I be on this side? No, it's the mist that makes it sound so."

Uncovering his head, and clinging with both hands to the staff which now stood firmly planted in the ground, he cast aside all other thoughts and breathed a silent prayer.

While praying, he could not help thinking: O God! I can still pray, although I could so far forget myself and go astray.

The immortal words which an inspired mind drew from the depths of the human heart and its never-ending struggles, thousands of years ago, have been, and still are, the source of blessings innumerable. They are a guide to the lonely wanderer who has lost his way in the mist and darkness of the forest, and lead him back to the right path. The bell utters its sounds and, though it does not speak in words, it yet fills the soul with those immortal words which serve as a staff to the weary and a guide to the blind. When Hansei finished his prayer, the bell was still tolling, and it seemed to him as if the whole village, every soul in it,—and above all, his wife and child—were calling to him. And now he found the path. He descended the stony bed of a dried mountain current which led into the valley. He had gone far out of his way, for when he descended the mountain, he found himself back of the Chamois inn. Evil desires, fright, devotion, and losing his way had made him both hungry and thirsty.

"Ah! God greet you, Hansei," exclaimed the host.

"God greet you! God be with you!" stammered out Hansei, confusedly.

"What's the matter with you? You're as pale as death. What's happened to you? Where do you come from?" inquired the host.

"I'll tell you all about it, after a while," answered Hansei; "but, first of all, give me a schoppen of wine."

The wine was brought, and Hansei looked around, as if wondering where he was.

He felt as if he had come from another world, and it was not until he had eaten some bread and salt, that he told them of the strange adventures he had had that day. He had gone out into the forest to load up the wood, and had lost his way, and wandered in the direction of Windenreuthe. He said this intentionally, lest some one might have seen him in that neighborhood.

They spoke of the belief in ghosts, but the innkeeper ridiculed such nursery tales. Hansei made no reply. The innkeeper remarked, very sensibly:

"You're often bewildered, nowadays, just because your Walpurga isn't with you. You're thinking of her all the time, and that's what makes you lose your way."

"Yes—quite likely."

"Do you know what they call you in the village, now?"

"Well, what?"

"The he-nurse. Your wife, who's with the crown prince, is the she-nurse, and so they call you the he-nurse."

Hansei laughed with all his might.

"Say, Hansei, what pay does your wife get?" inquired Wastl the weaver.

"I won't tell," replied Hansei, with an air of mystery.

"It's a long while since you had a letter from your wife, isn't it?" inquired the innkeeper.

"No; I'm expecting one any hour." He had scarcely uttered the words, when the letter-carrier entered and said, "So here you are, Hansei; I've been at your house twice to-day. I've got a letter with money in it, for you."

"Let's have it," said Hansei, breaking the five seals with a trembling hand.

"A nice way of treating money," said the innkeeper, picking up a hundred florin note from the floor. "That'll suit me very well. I've use for one, and will give you the change for it."

"All right," said Hansei, leaving the money in the innkeeper's hands. He then read his letter:

"Dear Hansei: This time, I write to you all alone. Here are a hundred florins that the queen has given me for a special present, because you haven't come to see me; but I must tell you all about it so that you can understand it. You've no idea what a good soul the queen is; whenever you pray, pray for her. We often sit together for hours, and she can take down everything on paper beautifully—the trees and all sorts of things, and we talk to each other as if we had gone to school together. But she's Lutheran and is very good and pious, and has such kind thoughts about all things that an ugly word couldn't pass her lips. If she weren't Lutheran, she might become a saint, but she'll get to heaven anyhow. That's my belief, and you can believe it, too; but you needn't tell any one.

"Well, the queen wanted to give me a treat. She would like to make the whole world happy; that's the way the saints must have been in the olden times. Well, as I said before, the queen wanted to give me a treat, because her husband came home well and hearty, and they're so fond of each other, and she wanted you and the child and mother to come and see me for one or two days, for she notices everything; she looks right into your heart, and I'm often homesick for you all. And when the queen talked about having you come, I said to her: 'That would be very nice, but it would cost a pretty penny,' and so I let her make me a present of the money, and we can make better use of it. You haven't the right sort of clothes, you know, and the people here might make fun of you. But with all that, I wouldn't have got the money, for that's nothing to her. She never thinks of such things. She's never counted money in all her life, and I really believe that she don't know how to reckon. The court paymaster attends to all that. Here there's an extra servant for everything—butlers and silver keepers and lots of others. But now my good countess is back again. She's been to see her father. They say he's a sort of a hermit who don't want to know anything of the world, and I must thank my countess that I got the money, for she knows how to manage everything. And so I send you the money. Put it out safely, and don't forget to

'take some of it to make a holiday for you and the child and grandmother.

"Ah, dear Hansei, the palace folk are not all saints and honest people, as I once used to think. Lots of thieving and deceit are carried on here. The father of my Made-moiselle Kramer is an honorable old man; he's the keeper of the castle here, and he's told me many things. But one can be honest everywhere, in the palace or in the cottage by the lake. And now, I beg of you dear Hansei—I always say 'dear Hansei,' whenever I think of you, and that's very often. It was only last night that I dreamt of you, but I won't tell you about that, because we oughtn't to believe in dreams. But write to me very soon and tell me how it goes with you; send me a good, long letter, and don't let the time seem long till we meet again; and always think as kindly of me as I do of you.

"Till death, your faithful WALPURGA."

In spite of their entreaties, Hansei would not tell a word of what was in the letter; he went home quietly, and kissed his sleeping child. He felt happy that he could thus be at home again, and that his home did not reject him. A cold sweat came over him when he thought that he was sleeping in this bed, and of what a changed man he might have become. He stretched forth his hand toward his wife's bed and, in the silent night, kissed her pillow.

"Now I'm all right again," said he. He arose, struck a light, and removed the letter which he had put into his shoe. Then, cutting the passage, "until death, your faithful Walpurga," out of the letter last received, he loosened the inner sole, placed the little paper underneath it, and fastened the sole down again. After that, he soon fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER II.

"YOUR MAJESTY," said Countess Irma to the king
one day, while walking on the veranda with him—
the queen was in the music-room, practicing a
classical composition with one of the court performers—
'it is curious that, while absence lends additional charms

and greater merit to some persons, there are others who are all the more perfect and interesting when one is in constant, daily intercourse with them. And yet, when away from such, it is almost impossible to remember them just as they are; and as to describing their character, or even their personal appearance, to one who is not acquainted with them—why, that is entirely out of the question. How do you account for it?"

"I must confess that I have never reflected on the subject," replied the king, "but it seems to me that the chief characteristic of the one class is an infinitude of small details; while with the other, one is struck by the general effect of the various traits that go to make up the character. Those whose character still presents an unsolved problem, and who thus give us more to think of, would seem to belong to the class to whom absence lends importance. Does it not seem so to you?"

"Certainly; but I might also say that the one class are more impressive and thus even in the present, seem like remote historical personages. Although they die, they yet remain—indeed, absence is a sort of death. The others however, only exist as long as they breathe, and only live for us as long as we breathe the same atmosphere with them."

"Can you name examples of such imposing historical personages, and also of ephemeral ones?"

"At present, I could only recall the historical."

A slight blush passed over the king's features. "Well," said he, when he found that Irma hesitated, "I beg of you—"

"In that class, I place my father over all others. I cannot describe to Your Majesty how his great nature seems constantly before me."

"Yes, I've often heard him spoken of as a man of high character and eminent ability. It is a pity, for his sake—and, still more, for our own—that he is opposed to the government. And in which class would you count me? I have sufficient confidence in your candor to believe that you will frankly give me your opinion, and you are so sure of my—my—respect, that you can speak without reserve."

"Your Majesty is present company," replied Irma, "and yet, at the same time, absent; or your position exalts you far above the rest of us."

"Friendship does not dwell on the throne, but here where we stand on equal ground, dear Countess."

"Nor does friendship pass sentence," replied the countess. "Her place is not the judgment-seat. I know of nothing more revolting than when men who profess to be friends, constantly cast up their accounts with each other, as if to say: 'You are worth so much and I am worth so much; this is yours and this is mine—'"

"Ah, these state affairs," interposed the king, as a lackey announced the arrival of the minister. "We will speak of this subject again," he added, taking leave of Irma and politely greeting the ladies and gentlemen whom he passed on his way. He offered his hand to his prime minister and, accompanied by him, went into the palace.

Irma's friendly relations with the king seemed to have acquired new life since her return. Her daily greeting seemed filled with the joy of meeting after long separation.

When the king would say: "Good morning, Countess," and Irma would answer: "Thanks, Your Majesty," there lay a wealth of unuttered thought in those simple words. The king had never before been in so pleasing and witty a mood, and Irma, it was justly said, had brought the mountain breezes with her. The queen would never tire of telling the ladies and gentlemen of the court how pleased she was with Irma, who, although simple and unaffected, possessed the highest intellectual gifts.

Like melodies that have sunk deep into the soul and which gradually return and harmoniously blend, so did her father's words and ideas now recur to Irma. She had spent weeks in a strict school, where idle talk and trifling were of no value and where distinctness and certainty were insisted upon. Formerly, Irma had been regarded as a child of nature, freely pouring forth whatever engaged her thoughts; but now they recognized in her a mind whose groundwork was solid and comprehensive, and which, nevertheless, was full of the simplicity of nature. She was full of sympathy and kindness, but did not concern herself about prevailing modes of thought.

She freely expressed her likes and dislikes, and one was obliged to admit that she was something more than a mere original or artless hoyden, and that she really possessed intellectual self-consciousness to a great degree.

Irma often changed her style of dressing her hair. This was naturally censured as coquetry, and as an attempt to draw the glances of all upon her. But it was simply a desire to appear different every day, even though it were in unimportant and subordinate matters.

It was very fortunate for Irma that she had become so attached to Walpurga; for, on sunny afternoons, the queen would scarcely ever suffer Walpurga to leave her; and then Irma would be seated with them and would read aloud to the queen, or join Walpurga in some of the lovely mountain songs.

The king's eyes would sparkle with delight when he happened to join them at such times, and find Irma with his wife.

"You look troubled," said the queen, when the king, who had just left the ministerial council, joined her and Irma in the park.

"And so I am."

"May I ask why?"

Irma was about to withdraw, but the king said:

"Stay, Countess; the matter is one which has been brought to an issue by the case of your friend Emma." Turning to the queen, he added: "Has our countess told you of the terrible fate of her friend?"

"She has; and when I think of it, I feel as if I were standing on the edge of a precipice."

Strangely enough, the king had, thus far, neither spoken to Irma about the matter, nor alluded to her letter. Irma had had so much to engage her mind since her return, that Emma's troubles had almost escaped her memory.

"Our friend," began the king, "has informed me of the affair, and I appreciate her delicacy in refraining from pressing the subject. In matters of state, we have no right to allow personal feelings to affect us. Nevertheless, one of our greatest pleasures is to find that our friends cherish our honor as their own."

Irma looked down. He added:

“Although a prince owes thanks to his friends, for informing him of what is going on, no influence, not even the best, should affect his decision.”

Irma did not dare to raise her eyes.

“The matter stands thus,” continued the king. “We have provisionally suspended the right to receive new nuns, and now the ministers desire me, at the next meeting of the estates, to consent to the introduction of a law by which the convent of Frauenwörth is to be definitively placed upon the extinct list. They hope by this and additional measures, to be enabled to make a stand against the constantly increasing strength of the opposition.”

The king looked at Irma while he said this, and she inquired:

“And has Your Majesty approved the draft of the law?”

“Not yet. I have no special feeling in favor of keeping up the convents, but I don’t find it so easy a matter to lay the axe to a tree which is the growth of centuries. It is the special duty of royalty to establish and foster institutions that are to endure longer than a generation or even a century, and a convent—What do you think of it, Mathilde?”

“I think that a woman who has lost all, should not be prevented from devoting herself to solitude and prayer. But perhaps I ought not express an opinion on the subject. My youthful impressions, or rather instruction, in regard to convent life, may not always have been correct. It seems to me that woman alone should have the right to determine as to the continuance of a convent. What do you think of it, Countess Irma? You were educated at a convent, and Emma is your friend.”

“Yes,” said Irma, “I was with my friend at Frauenwörth, where she desires to live, or rather to die; for life there is a daily waiting for death. It seems terrible to me, too, to think of making what may perhaps be only a passing mood, the irrevocable law of one’s life, or a fate from which there can be no escape. And yet many other holy institutions are just the same. I can now see what an exalted and difficult vocation it is to be a king. I frankly confess that if I were now called upon to decide

this matter, or to suggest a law upon the subject, I could not arrive at a decision. Now, more than ever before, do I realize that we women were not born to rule."

Irma's voice, although usually so clear and firm, was now veiled and trembling. She was standing on a pinnacle where she could find no firm footing; she looked up to the king, as if to a higher being; his bearing was so firm, his eye so clear. She would gladly have fallen on her knees at his feet.

"Come nearer, Count Wildenort," exclaimed the king.

Irma started. Was her father there? She was so excited that everything seemed possible.

She had, at the moment, quite forgotten that her brother Bruno was the king's aid-de-camp. He had been standing a little distance off, and now approached, in order to take his leave of the queen, as he was about to go away for some time.

The king and queen left; after which, Irma and her brother walked away.

The king's behavior seemed a riddle; but for this he had his own reasons, the first and greatest of which was invincible distrust of others. "Distrust all," was the great precept which had been instilled into him from earliest youth. "One can never know what selfish purposes may lurk behind the noblest exterior." This maxim was in accord with one trait of the king's character. He desired to be strong in himself, to allow no one to guide his judgment; and that is the great secret of the heroic nature. It was this which, with all his love of freedom, had made constitutionalism repugnant to him; for the constitution destroyed great and powerful personal influence, and required that he be simply the vehicle of the spirit of the age, or the exponent of public opinion. This was opposed to his own strong self-consciousness. He distrusted every one who attempted to press him for an opinion or a decision. He even distrusted Irma. Perhaps she did not know that she was the instrument of a party; but she was, nevertheless. They had found out that he held her in great esteem, and were now availing themselves of Emma's entering the convent, to force him to a decision. He would not submit to this. Irma should

be made to know that he would not allow another, even though it were his lovely friend, to lead him. The olden time could never again return. They would find him a new being; he would not permit female interference in state affairs.

It was these conflicting feelings of distrust and self-exaltation that had induced the king to refrain from mentioning Irma's letter, and at last to speak of it in the way he had.

While walking with the queen, the king still enjoyed his victory over the women and, above all, over the one whom he had believed possessed of so powerful a mind. He repeatedly spoke of Irma's petition in favor of her friend, and of his determination not to be swayed by it. His remarks betrayed a trace of ill-humor toward Irma. The queen was lavish in her praise of the countess. The king smiled.

CHAPTER III.

“DON'T let me wait any longer for your answer,” said Bruno to his sister; “are you ready?”

“I beg your pardon. What was it? I was so pre-occupied that I didn't hear you.”

Bruno looked at his sister with an air of surprise. Irma had indeed not heard him. She had been puzzling her brain in regard to the king's behavior. He had plainly intimated that he would allow no one to influence his course in state affairs. It now occurred to Irma that the tone of the letter which she had written while at the convent, had been quite improper, and her heart was filled with thanks to the great and noble man, who, having it in his power to forgive her, had forgiven her so gracefully. She felt doubly grateful to him for refusing to be swayed by her ardent entreaties. She was, herself, in doubt as to the best course, and it now seemed to her, as at first, that it was the duty of the state to prevent the consummation of an irrevocable vow.

“I beg your pardon,” she again said to her brother. “Do you wish anything of me?”

“You must go with me to-morrow,” said Bruno;

"we're going on a journey. I've already obtained leave of absence for myself, and the queen will grant you leave."

"Go on a journey? Where?"

"To witness my betrothal."

"Surely not with—?"

"Certainly; with the king's sister; or, if you'd rather have it so, his half, or quarter sister. Baroness Arabella von Steigeneck will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

Irma looked down. It was the oldest daughter of the dancer who had been ennobled by the late king. Irma spoke of the impression that this marriage would make upon her father; but Bruno jestingly answered, that he and his sister had been separated from their father, who indulged the strange whim of desiring to be a common citizen. Perceiving that his remarks displeased Irma, he changed his manner and explained to her how cruel and narrow-minded it would be to make Baroness Arabella, who had royal blood in her veins, suffer on account of a few irregularities for which she was not to blame. And when he represented to Irma, that, independent of his wishes, it was her duty to meet Arabella in a spirit of kindness and without prejudice, he touched the right chord. He added:

"You are so affectionate to the simple minded peasant woman, the crown prince's nurse. It is very cheap to practice humanity toward one of the lower classes. You will find its exercise pleasanter and more effective in this instance."

"I am glad to find that you think so," replied Irma, regarding her brother with a more cheerful glance.

Bruno was delighted. He had used the right bait, and, for a few moments, found real pleasure in conversing on such subjects as elevation of mind and nobility of soul. Irma consented to accompany him. When she applied to the queen for leave of absence, and the latter, in the most delicate manner, intimated surprise at Bruno's choice, Irma proved herself so zealous an advocate of humanity that the queen could not avoid saying to her:

"You are, and ever will be, a noble heart."

Irma imprinted a fervent kiss on the queen's hand. They started off on their journey, taking with them Bruno's two private servants, and jockey Fritz, Baum's son. Father Baum, who was both indispensable and ubiquitous, also accompanied them.

Bruno was in high spirits. Like all other epicures, he was not averse to occasional tender scenes. He played the piano excellently and, at times, would indulge in a sentimental adagio. Irma now seemed sentimental in his eyes. But he soon tired of the melting mood and in his flippant, jesting manner, exclaimed:

"I am better than the world of cavaliers that surround us. You smile—and wonder what sort of cavaliers they must be among whom I am the best.—Yes, dear sister Krimhilde, it is so nevertheless. I honestly confess that I only marry this lady in order to be enabled to lead as jolly a life as possible, and am I not better than those who act the hypocrite in such a case?"

"Yes, if you think that makes you better. But I think you're simply ashamed of being in love, and are afraid of appearing sentimental."

"Thanks! You're a profound judge of human nature."

Bruno, at heart, desired his sister to imagine that he was in love; for that would render the demeanor of both of them more natural and more befitting the occasion. He blushed and smiled with a bashful air.

Baroness Steigeneck lived in a little town and occupied a castle which had once been a retreat of a sister of the late king.

They reached the castle. A bright peacock stood on the high wall, and filled the air with its shrill cry.

Rooms had been prepared for Bruno and Irma, who retired to change their dress. Bruno appeared in full uniform, and with all his medals and orders. They were conducted to Baroness Steigeneck's *salon* by two servants, who opened the folding doors. Baroness Steigeneck, who was clad in studiously simple attire, came forward to meet Bruno and Irma, and received them with a graceful bow. Bruno kissed her, and then embraced his betrothed, who, in form and feature, presented a pleasing

appearance. He introduced her to his sister, who embraced and kissed her.

The furniture of the castle was splendid, but in somewhat gaudy taste, with more regard to show than comfort. A life-size picture of the late king was displayed in the great *salon*.

Irma felt alarmed when she first beheld the old baroness. Her boudoir was hung with pictures of herself, taken while she was yet a young, beautiful and voluptuous creature, and representing her in various bold poses, such as Psyche, Eros, and the Fairy Queen. And could this heavy woman, with rigid features, be the same person? Her chief employment was card-playing, and it was here, for the first time in her life, that Irma saw people who would sit at cards by the hour, out in the open air, under the trees, and amid the singing of birds. What would become of some people, how empty their lives would be, if there were no cards!

The time was pleasantly spent with music—for Baroness Arabella sang beautifully,—merry dinners and excursions in the neighborhood. Irma could not help watching the servants, and wondering how they felt, and what their thoughts must be, while serving such a mistress. But she saw the same respect shown as at court; and when they drove through the little town, the people would stop and lift their hats in token of respect, for the baroness had brought life and money to the place. Everything in this world, even respect, can be purchased.

Three days sped by quickly. Baroness Steigeneck held a little court, quite modest in appearance. An old and exceedingly eccentric French legitimist was the special attraction of this, and French was the only language spoken.

The formal betrothal was speedily settled by the notary, whom Bruno had brought with him from the capital. He had been carefully instructed, and it fared hard with the old Baroness. There were all sorts of devilishly close clauses in reference to death or separation. Bruno had made himself secure. The Baroness jestingly spoke of love, and said that she had not imagined such enthusiasm possible at the present day. Bruno agreed with her, for

they both well knew that it was simply a question of money.

Arabella had the air of a well-bred lady and possessed that degree of education that can be purchased from teachers. She could sing and sketch, and spoke three foreign languages, which, at her mother's bidding, she was obliged to make a parade of. But all of this showed application, rather than native talent. She had also read a great deal, but affected ignorance of certain works, passages in which might be applied to herself or her mother.

Irma was exceedingly kind to her sister-in-law, and Bruno heartily thanked her. And yet Irma's mind was not at ease. The house seemed under the influence of a peculiar spell—it was just as if in fairy-land. People would go about, and laugh and joke and sing and play, but there was one word they dared not utter; for, at the very mention of it, the castle, with all its pomp and splendor, would disappear. And that word was: "father." But it was here that Irma was the more impelled to think of her father. When alone in her room, she began a letter to him, and when she wrote the words; "Dear Father," she looked about her. She regarded it as her duty, and thought herself better able than Bruno, to inform her father of the betrothal, and to invoke his forbearance for this unfortunate, though wealthy, girl. Never before had she made so many unsuccessful attempts to write a letter. She had begun again and again, and had always ended by tearing up the sheet and throwing it into the fire. She found it impossible to finish her letter, and at last concluded to wait until she returned to the summer palace. But she could not get rid a desire to speak of parents, and when Baum came to her with a message, she detained him with the question:

"Baum, are your parents still living?"

"No."

"Did you know them long?"

Baum coughed behind his raised hand and answered: "I never knew my father; and my mother—my mother was taken from me long ago."

Baum, who still held his hand before his face, bit his

lips and at last ventured to ask: "May I inquire, my lady, why you put that question to me?"

"I desire to acquaint myself with the life and history of those whom I know personally."

Baum dropped his hand and his face was as smooth and void of expression as before.

The strictest decorum was observed during their stay at the castle. On one occasion, however, Irma felt offended, and that was when the old lady—they called her "Her Grace"—declared the relation of an affianced couple the silliest of all conventionalities—the most natural and proper course would be to have marriage follow immediately upon the betrothal—yes, in the very same hour.

These remarks were accompanied by a peculiar change in the expression of the old lady's features. Irma was startled and did not get over her fright, for when, at parting, the baroness impressed a kiss upon her, Irma could not help shuddering.

Irma had been in the carriage for some time, when Bruno at last came, and again stopped to throw a kiss to his betrothed, who was standing at the window.

They drove off, and when Irma found herself alone with her brother she said, in a loud voice and with a strange expression:

"Oh, father! father!" She drew a long and deep breath, as if relieved from some dread spell.

"What ails you?" said Bruno.

Irma did not care to tell him what she felt, and merely replied:

"As soon as we get back to the palace, you must write to father, or, what would be better, must go to him. Let him scold you, if it must be. He's our father, after all, and will be kind to you once more and accept what is past."

"We had better write," said Bruno.

"No!" exclaimed Irma, clasping both his hands, "you must do it, for Arabella's sake."

"For her sake?"

"Yes. I wish her to feel that there is some one whom she can address as 'father'; that would be the happiest moment she had ever known."

Bruno drew back. After a little while, he said:

"Let us speak softly. You know, I suppose, that you've touched me in a tender spot. Arabella couldn't call any one father, and can't do so now. Irma, you're strong enough to look the truth in the face. What is it that forms the indissoluble bond between father and child? It is not nature alone, but history. By rejecting our rank, our father has denied father and mother and our long line of ancestors. It was he who broke the strong and glittering chain that, through him, linked us to our house. We have renewed the connection which was thus broken, but, in doing so, have become sundered from our father. He separated himself from us; in the sense in which you mean, we can neither of us say 'father.'"

Irma turned pale. She had never thought of the matter in that light, and had never dreamt that Bruno would thus defend his course. She had thought his life naught but frivolity, and now, for the first time, beheld the deep chasm that separated them. She was about to reply that her father had remained true to all that was noble, to all that the best of their ancestors had transmitted to him, and that he had simply cast aside the external prerogatives of rank. But, for the first time, she felt that she could not maintain her ground against her brother. She too, had separated herself from her father. She was silent. They drove on and, for hours, neither spoke a word.

They reached the summer palace. To all who congratulated her on her brother's betrothal, Irma offered most courteous thanks. She felt strangely embarrassed in the presence of the court jeweler, who had been requested to present himself at the palace with various caskets of gems. She was to join Bruno in selecting a rich present for Arabella. She did so, but would not suffer any of the jewels to be tried on herself. Her maid was present for that purpose, and, at last, they decided on a rich set of diamonds, which was at once dispatched to Bruno's betrothed.

CHAPTER IV.

IRMA recovered her wonted cheerfulness and was the merriest sprite of the whole court, teasing and bantering every one except Colonel Bronnen, with whom alone she was always serious and reserved. She rode out a great deal and often accompanied the king in the chase, in which the other court ladies were also glad to join. The advance of autumn rendered the air fresh and bracing, and there was no lack of variety in their amusements. The queen was obliged to remain at home. She had Walpurga and the prince about her for a great part of the time, and was made happy by every new proof of the child's dawning intelligence. He already knew his mother and had begun to notice many objects. She deplored her husband's restless mind, which constantly craved new and violent excitement, and thus deprived him of many delightful moments with his child.

They would often take their meals in the woods or on the mountains, whither their viands and cooking utensils were quickly transported on the backs of mules.

The idea had originated with Baron Schoning, and he was not a little vain of it. It was, indeed, a surprise that almost savored of magic, to find a banquet spread in the heart of the forest, or on some height that commanded a lovely view; and at the end of the feast all of their paraphernalia would as quickly disappear.

Ever since his return from the lake, Baron Schoning had treated Irma with as much forbearance and consideration as if he had refused her, instead of having been refused by her, and he really felt as if he were the one who had said "no." The idea of his ever entertaining thoughts of marriage now seemed to him sheer madness. The baron endeavored, withal, to assume an air of dignity, but, in doing so, acted very cautiously, lest too sudden a change in his deportment might awaken unpleasant comment. He had told Irma that the court imagined it was trifling with him, while he in reality was playing with it. The bold change which he was now attempting to consummate had, in truth, only suggested itself to him during the conversation referred to,

Schoning was an odd character at court. He had, at the start, entered the diplomatic service, but soon left it, in order to become a landscape artist. His achievements in his new vocation proving of slight merit, he sought, and found it an easy matter to obtain, a position at court. He became one of the directors of the royal gardens and chief in the office of the lord steward and, by virtue of his position, chamberlain also.

In familiar moments, he was fond of telling his intimate friends—and these, of course, included every lady and gentleman at court—that his real vocation was art; that he had only sacrificed it for the sake of the king, whom he loved above all beings; and maintained that this was a duty that the nobles owed their sovereign. A landscape of his, showing a view of the lake, on the borders of which lay Walpurga's birthplace, was hanging in the summer palace. It was a clever picture, but malicious tongues asserted that one of his friends, at the academy, had painted the landscape, and that another had done the figures.

On their mountain excursions, Schoning paid marked attention to Irma, who could freely indulge her wanton humor with him, for it was well understood, at court, that no one could have a love affair with Schoning. He was the butt of every one, and knew how to take, as well as give a joke.

Schoning would, many a time, have liked to avoid taking part in these excursions, for he well knew that his attempts to acquire dignity were far from being successful. But even pretended illness did not serve as an excuse; for, without Schoning, there was no target for their jests.

What was he to do? He put the best face possible on the matter and, with feigned willingness, accompanied them.

Notwithstanding the wide difference in their stations, Schoning and Baum were both indispensable.

Baum was the favorite servant at court. He was fortunate enough to be useful in every way, and no country party, no dinner in the woods, no excursion on the water, was considered complete without him. Actors are often vexed when they are not sufficiently employed, or are

cast for unimportant parts, and lackeys, in the same way, have a jealous desire to be kept ever busy. It follows, as a matter of course, that Baum had his favorites, whom he would, when occasion offered, mention approvingly to the lord steward, and they obeyed him as if he were their natural superior. The queen's shawl, or the king's pale-tot, were never so well carried as by Baum. While hanging on his arm, they would almost seem to say: "Oh, how warm and soft we are, and we are ready, at any time, to protect and warm you. Your Majesties have only to command us."

The evenings were pleasantly spent. After tea, they would usually repair to the inner palace yard and, by the light of torches, look at the wild beasts that had been shot during the day's hunt. The queen, although loth to behold such sights, would always join the party, lest they might regard her as being sentimental. Success in the chase always put the king in a good humor. They would then return to the open saloons, where they would have instrumental and vocal music, play cards or have some one read to them. Irma was an excellent billiard player, and won many a game from the king. Her every movement was full of grace and every pose that she assumed while playing was worthy of an artist's pencil.

"How beautiful she is," the queen would often say to her husband, who would nod assent. There was much merriment in the great billiard-room. Before parting for the night, the inner circle of the court would gather, as if for rest and retrospection; for, every evening, the chronicle of the day was read aloud. Baron Schoning had conducted this daily journal for many years. It was written in verse and, what was still better, in the Highland dialect. Countess Irma was often mentioned in it, under the name of the "Rock-maiden." All the little events of the day were presented in a comic dress, and, as the company knew all the personages referred to, the reading of the journal always occasioned great merriment. The king was usually referred to as Nimrod, or Artus. Nor were the dogs forgotten, and one of the standing jokes was: "Foster-mother Walpurga ate heartily, and Romulus drank copiously. Aunt Lint"—meaning Made-

moiselle Kramer—"began to recount her family history, but has not yet reached the end."

After the king and queen had retired, the court would break up into small parties. Accompanied by Doctor Gunther, Irma would often ascend some neighboring height or descend into the valley. Gunther taught her the constellations: and here, in the stilly night, he would explain to her the great laws that govern the universe; how the planets move in infinite space, attracted and repelled, so that none described a perfect circle. They would often speak of Irma's father, who, Gunther maintained, would be able to complete his circle, because he had isolated himself. The doctor, however, maintained that his own case was different; that it had been his lot to remain in the world; that an elliptical course was the only one in which he could move; and that, being a physician, he was obliged to influence others and was unable to escape their influence on himself. Thus absorbed in the secrets of the universe, the old man and the maiden would forget themselves until fatigue warned them that it was time to return and seek repose.

Irma would often say that she intended to spend much of her time with the Gunthers, during the winter. The young widow and her child had now come home to live with the father.

Irma would rarely retire for the night, without first visiting Walpurga, who would generally lie awake and wait for her, and who, if she had fallen asleep, would, as if conscious of her presence, awaken as soon as Irma drew near. They would sit talking to each other for some time. Walpurga had always much to relate about her clever prince, and still more about the good queen.

The days grew shorter, the evenings longer. The gardeners were kept busy, clearing the fallen leaves from the paths, before the court awoke. It was said they would soon leave the summer palace and return to the capital. The king had preceded them thither. Surrounded by a new ministry, of which Schnabelsdorf was president, he opened the parliament in person.

Gunther felt sorry, and expressed his regrets to Irma, that the king, in appointing a reactionary and ultramon-

nate ministry, had taken a step fraught with serious consequences. In firm and measured language, he inveighed against all the romance of the convent. Irma had not enough courage to confess how much she was to blame in all this, and consoled herself with the thought that the king had, in the queen's presence, rejected all outside influence. For the first time, she became conscious of a feeling of antagonism to the doctor, who, in her eyes, now seemed illiberal and filled with the fanaticism of unbelief. He was a stranger to the greatest glory in life, the flights of a soaring soul, and anathematized them by the words "romance" and "sentimentalism." The king, solitary and alone while breasting the torrent of public opinion, seemed to her greater than ever before. The idea that she had once expressed in a letter to Emma, gradually became clearer to her. No one but a king, and such a one as he, has the large and comprehensive mind that will not suffer itself to be cramped by the systems of the schools. Logic is only part of the human mind. The complete man alone possesses a complete mind.

Even such a mind and such a man as the doctor, seemed to her to suffer by comparison with the only one.

Walpurga was quite uneasy on account of the second change of residence, and complained to Irma that it was a fearful life. "Why, it's nothing but living in carriages. You never get a chance to feel settled anywhere. It don't seem right to go and come in this way. Of course, they drive the cattle away from the mountain-meadows when the grass is gone, but cattle aren't human beings. I can't help pitying my poor prince, for there's nothing in his youth worth remembering. When he gets older, he won't be able to say: 'I used to be at home here, and saw these trees blossom and bear fruit; and then the snow covered them, and, after that, the spring came'—and if the poor child hasn't that, where'll it ever have a home?"

At breakfast, Irma repeated Walpurga's words, and found much that was affecting and poetical in this identifying one's-self with nature, and in this attachment to lifeless objects. The ladies and gentlemen in the breakfast-room could not understand where the poetry lay, for to them, it seemed narrow-mindedness. Baron Schoning

interposed, and reminded them that this attachment to the soil possessed its advantages; for it was thus alone that solitary heights and valleys were inhabited. He maintained that the common people could only be governed by the force of habit; that man, as a free agent, must rid himself of such restraint; and that the true poetic idea was that of Pegasus resting on the earth, but yet able to wing his flight aloft.

Schoning looked about him as if he expected applause for his profound remark. It failed, however, to produce an impression. He had so constantly ministered to the amusement of the court, that all his attempts to be serious were failures, suggesting the success with which a well-known comedian or country bumpkin would undertake a tragic *rôle*. Schoning imagined that Irma understood him better than any of the others, but even she was not in a humor to assent that day. Gunther was the first to take up the conversation, saying that the present desire for incessant travel constituted a new impulse in the history of mankind, and one which no former age had known to the same extent. The generation which, even in its cradle, had heard the whistle of the locomotive, must, of necessity, be different from its predecessors. But yet poetry would never die, for every mother would teach her child to sing, and time, the everlasting mother, would teach unto the children of a new generation, new songs, different from those of the past but none the less full of beauty and feeling.

The queen nodded to Gunther, and her face was mantled with blushes, while she said that she agreed with Walpurga, and would rather remain in one place and become settled there.

The gentlemen and ladies of the court were loud in their praise of the queen's beautiful and feeling remarks, while, in their hearts, many considered them just as foolish as Walpurga's.

When they had left the table, the queen said to Irma:

"Dear Countess, you shouldn't say such things at table, or in the presence of company. Let me assure you, they are out of place there. Walpurga's thoughts are like fresh wild-flowers, which, when plucked and

bound into a bouquet, soon wither and die. It is only artificially cultivated flowers that are adapted for the *salon*, and the best of all are those made of tulle and gauze. Hereafter, confide such things to me alone."

Irma was delighted with this agreement; but when, at noon, the queen told Walpurga what she had heard about her, the latter was angry at Irma. It won't do, thought she, to repeat everything you hear. She felt ashamed of herself, and became shy and reserved in Irma's presence. It was only when she was alone with the prince, that she whispered: "Yes, my little wanderer; after this, you shall be the only one to whom I'll tell everything. You're the cleverest in the whole house, and the only one who holds his tongue. You won't say a word to any one, will you?"

Walpurga was quite troubled by the idea of leaving, and Baum was the only one who knew how to pacify her. He said:

"Don't be foolish. What do the furniture and the trees and all the rest matter to you? They remain here. You step into the carriage and ride to the city and, when you get there, find all you need, ready for you. There are hands and feet enough to attend to all that."

Walpurga gradually quieted herself. They waited for the first sunny day, and then the queen, the prince, Walpurga and the royal suite drove to the capital. The summer palace was once more lonely and deserted; dead leaves filled the paths in the park and were no longer swept away. The great colored lamps of the veranda were put away for safe-keeping, and the large windows were covered with layers of straw. The summer palace entered on its winter sleep, and, in the mean while, new life awakened at the city palace.

CHAPTER V.

THE royal palace was in the center of the city, and was without walls or fosse. Although its windows looked down on the busy streets, it seemed as if it stood on some fortified height, and as if outworks for offense

and defense surrounded it for some distance. It was only at rare intervals, and in indistinct utterances, that a stray echo of popular feeling penetrated so far. There were hundreds of human beings, from the lowest kitchen servant up to the major-domo, who served in place of wall or fosse, and prevented all except the favored few from entering the royal presence.

The king was in a happy mood and yet his cheerfulness seemed forced. He was a prey to a restless disposition which would not permit him to dwell long on any one subject. From morning till night, he required constant change and gay excitement.

If he had been asked to answer on his conscience, he would frankly have said: "I respect the constitution and am faithful to it"—and yet, at heart, he was unconquerably opposed to it, for it cramped his individuality. It was in the same way that he loved his wife, while his heart paid homage to her friend; but that he should be subjected to the law, or even to his own desires, was equally distasteful to him—for that, too, would retard the full development of his new individuality. He regarded all that savored of opposition, whether it was the constitution of the state or the opinion of a kind friend, as an attempt to subjugate him. He desired to be perfectly free and yet not without law and affection. He could not forego the approbation of those to whom he was, at the same time, unwilling to accord the right to dissent. He would have liked his own people to regard him with as loyal an affection as that which the English bestow upon their rulers, but did not care to have it interfere with his following the dictates of his own judgment. He studied the laws of the state, but favored such interpretations thereof as rendered them nugatory. He loved the constitution, much as he did his wife; that is, he prized her virtues, and aimed to be faithful to her without sacrificing his inclinations.

The journals of the day reached the king in the form of an abstract, which was prepared in the literary court-kitchen. By his orders, stenographic reports of the proceedings of the Chamber of Deputies were brought to his cabinet, but for the greater part they remained unread.

There was too much to be done, too much of ceremonious receptions, parading and exercises. The new arsenal was now under roof, and they were engaged in supplying the decorations, devices for some of which were prepared by the king himself.

The great autumn maneuvers took place near the palace. There was much talk of changes, and, among the soldiers, great enthusiasm thereat. The queen and Irma, attired in the uniform of the queen's guards, appeared on horseback. The queen looked like a patron saint, while Irma, with her triumphant air, looked like a commander.

At the word of command, the huzzas of the soldiers filled the air, and it seemed as if their joyous shouts would never end.

Colonel Bronnen was quite devoted in his attentions to Irma. It was generally believed that he would, before long, sue for her hand. Some even went so far as to assert that they were already secretly betrothed, and that Irma's father, the old misanthrope, had refused his consent, but that the beautiful countess would be of age within a month. No regiment could have wished for a more beautiful colonel's wife.

Irma's life seemed to glide on in ecstatic happiness. She did not even know that the world had betrothed her. When she met the doctor, she would say: "I think of visiting your dear family, every day, but there is always something to prevent me; I'll surely come to-morrow or the day after."

Weeks passed before she paid the visit, and when she did call, the servant informed her that the family were not at home. Irma had intended to call again, and finally concluded that they had treated her rudely in neglecting to return her visit. She waited, and, at last, dropped all intercourse with them. It is far better, she thought in one's own sphere; aside from this, they were in mourning at the doctor's, and Irma was not in the mood to seek sorrowful scenes. The doctor himself even appeared ill at ease, for he had recently said to her:

"Most persons, even those who are matured and self-conscious, exhaust their joys, just as children do. Like them, they indulge their love of pleasure without stint,

and then follows the reaction, when joy is followed by tears."

Irma avoided all further discussion with him.

Rainy days came, and no one could leave the house. Walpurga would go about as if a prisoner, longing to be at the summer palace, although if she had been there at that season of the year, she would have been obliged to remain indoors. "Uncle was right," said she, jestingly, to Mademoiselle Kramer. "At the christening, he said I was a cow, and now I can fancy how a cow must feel, when it comes down from the mountain meadows to its stall in the valley. Grubersepp, who lives at our place, has a mountain meadow, and whenever his cows are brought home, they keep on lowing for three days, and won't eat a thing. If I only knew how things are at home; if I only felt sure that they keep my child indoors; but I'll write at once."

Walpurga wrote an anxious, sorrowful letter and was not content until good tidings came in return.

Whenever Irma entered the crown prince's apartments, even in the gloomiest weather, her presence seemed like sunshine. There was rarely a day that she did not come, although her visits were shorter than they had been. She said that the preparations for her brother's wedding took up so much of her time.

"I'd like to see your father," said Walpurga, one day; "he must be a splendid man to have such good and beautiful children."

Irma pressed her hand to her heart.

"If father comes I'll bring him to you," said she, as if to silence her. The innocent remark of this simple-minded woman had deeply moved her, and the anticipation of brilliant festivities gave way to sad and sombre thoughts. She was often in the city, either alone or attended by her brother, while making purchases for a complete and luxuriously furnished household. Women in large towns find as much pleasure in shopping as children in the woods do in gathering wild-flowers. To go from shop to shop, to compare, to select, to purchase—it is just like plucking flowers. Irma was enough of a child and woman of the world to delight in this, and to enjoy

the pleasure of furnishing a house according to her own taste. The workmen and shopkeepers exaggerated nothing when they said that they had never before met one whose orders showed such excellent judgment. Irma was not amiable and gracious, she was simply courteous. She never apologized for the trouble she gave the shopkeepers and workmen, for that was part of their business. She addressed them respectfully, freely expressed her approval, when their suggestions were in good taste, and thanked them for correcting her, when her demands were impracticable.

Could Irma have heard how sewing-women, workmen and shopmen praised her, it would have gladdened her heart.

It struck her as very singular that every one would make the mistake of speaking of the new establishment as her own, and not as her brother's.

The wedding was solemnized. Irma had no opportunity of introducing her father to Walpurga, for he did not come. During those few days, she neglected to visit the crown prince's apartments, and when she again went—she had dreaded Walpurga's questions—the nurse made no allusions to the wedding or to her father.

Irma felt that Mademoiselle Kramer had informed Walpurga of the state of affairs. She would gladly have placed matters before her in their true light, but that were impracticable. The common people could only understand simple relations, and an involved and complicated story, such as hers, would pass Walpurga's comprehension. Irma forced herself to appear the same to Walpurga as she had always been. The latter observed this, although she said nothing about it. She, too, had become strangely reserved.

Winter came in all its might. Walpurga could not go out into the open air, but found pleasure in taking long walks with the crown prince, inside the palace. A whole suite of apartments had been thrown open and heated for this purpose.

"You may sing if you like," the doctor had said to her. But Walpurga could not utter a sound in the grand saloons, for she was afraid of the pictures of men in coats

of mail, and of women with stiff ruffs or bare necks, who were looking down upon her.

"I know what I am going to say is very stupid, and you must promise not to repeat it," said she, one day, in confidence to Irma.

"What is it? You can always tell me everything."

"It's very silly, I'm sure, but it seems to me as if those men and women can't find rest in the other world and have got to be here all the time and look on at what happens."

"That isn't at all stupid," said Irma, smiling. "But, pay attention, Walpurga, to what I am about to tell you. To stand here, and feel that your father, your great-grandfather, and others still further back, are looking at you—that's what is meant by nobility. Thus, we are always in the company of our ancestors."

"I understand; it's just the same as if, in your heart, you were always saying a mass for the repose of their souls."

"That's it, exactly."

Irma thought of repeating this conversation to the queen. But, no; she would tell it to the king. His was a truly poetic and exalted conception of all things. Irma had accustomed herself to tell the king all that happened to her. She spoke to him of all her thoughts, and of every book that she read, and thus found all her experiences invested with a twofold interest. He was so grateful, so appreciative, so happy, and was, moreover, so burdened down with the cares of state that it was a duty to cheer him with other thoughts.

At the summer palace, the trees were covered with snow and the windows were protected with straw; but in the palace at the capital, pleasure reigned supreme. Here all was fragrance, splendor, glitter, and, in Bruno's house, it seemed as if the feasting would never end. The court had honored the opening fête with their presence, and, throughout the city, all spoke of the queen's great kindness, in visiting a sister-in-law of so peculiar a kind, and of her having, in the most affable and friendly manner, actually sat on the same sofa with her. The old baroness had also wished to attend the first fête given by her

children, but, having been informed that, in that case, the queen would not come, she remained at her castle in the little country town.

Arabella had written to Bruno's father. Her husband had not forbidden her doing so, but he had told her, beforehand, that she would receive no answer. He had every reason to feel assured of this, for he had never forwarded the letter.

Irma consoled her, and found it painful to offer such a description of her father's peculiarities as would satisfactorily account for his silence. It seemed like treachery, but she could not help it, for why should the poor child be made to suffer. But fête succeeded fête with such rapidity, that the father, the whilom dancer—aye, even her own thoughts, were soon forgotten.

The Chamber of Deputies was not far from the royal stables, and, while the delegates were heatedly discussing so-called decisive questions, the royal riding school was the scene of a rehearsal for a tournament in the knightly costume of the Middle Ages. Prince Arnold who, as the story went, was wooing princess Angelica, was chief of the gentlemen, and Irma of the ladies.

Although it was merely by accident that the tournament opened on the evening of the day on which the Chamber was dissolved, the circumstance occasioned much ironical comment throughout the capital.

Irma was the central figure in the brilliant scene. When she entered the royal box, the king lavished loud praise upon her beauty and skill.

The queen added her praises to his and said:

"You must feel happy, Countess Irma, to think that you afford us so much pleasure."

Irma bowed low and kissed the queen's hand.

There was hardly time to rest from one fête, before another succeeded it. The grand sleighing-party, which was especially brilliant, excited the whole city. The king and the queen drove in an open sleigh, and, in spite of their dissatisfaction with the policy of the government, the citizens were delighted to see the royal couple so happy. Following immediately after the sleigh of the prince of the house came that of Bruno and his handsome wife;

but, rich as were the trappings and handsome as were the couple, all glances were quickly turned to the next sleigh in which sat Irma and Baron Schoning. She had pitched upon him as the most convenient dummy. The countenances of the lookers-on were expressive of mingled surprise and derision.

"If Hansei could only see it! How I wish he could! One would hardly believe it!" said Walpurga, as she looked out of her window at the sleighing-party.

No one had noticed her but Irma, who nodded to her. How radiant she was; she had never looked so beautiful. The clear cold air of winter had wondrously animated her features. She was sitting in a swan, drawn by two white horses, and Walpurga said to herself: "Oh, you dear creature! You just look as if you couldn't help riding to heaven; but you'll never marry that clown aside of you." The last words she had uttered in quite a loud voice.

"She won't marry at all," said a voice behind her.

Walpurga looked around, startled. Baum had been standing behind her.

"What an everlasting eavesdropper you are," said she. All her joy had been embittered, but this did not last long, for Irma soon came and said:

"Walpurga, I can only warm myself with you. It is bitter cold, and you're like a good warm stove. You're growing as fat and as broad as a Dutch oven."

Walpurga was delighted with her friend. She was always coming to see her and allowing her to share in all her pleasures.

But Walpurga started with fright, when the king suddenly entered. Courteously bowing to Irma, he said:

"A letter has just come for you; I thought I would bring it myself."

Irma looked down, while she took the letter.

"Pray open it," said the king while he motioned Walpurga to follow him into the prince's room. When he came out again, the king said:

"Did the letter bring you good news?"

Irma looked at him with surprise, and at last said: "It was from my dearest friend."

The king nodded, as if pleased that the letter, which had been written by himself, should receive such an answer. He added, in a careless tone:

"Dear Countess, you will, of course, feel sad at parting from Walpurga, but her situation must necessarily end with time. Think of some other position for her, so that you may keep her near you."

Walpurga drew a long breath. "Give me the farm," lay on her lips, but she could not utter the words. She felt as if her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth.

The king soon took his leave. He always came and went so quickly.

"No, you shall not remain here," said Irma when she was alone with Walpurga. "It is better, a thousand times better for you, that you should go home again. Next summer, I'll come to see you. I'll never forget you. Rely upon it."

Walpurga now felt bold enough to express her wishes in regard to the farm; but Irma was immovable. "You know nothing about these things. Take my word for it—it will be far better for you, if you go home again."

CHAPTER VI.

"**H**OW do you live in the country in winter?" asked the queen while she sat by the cradle of her child.

"Well enough," replied Walpurga, "but wood is getting to be quite dear. We're glad when spring returns. To be sure, my Hansei has good earnings in the winter, when the wood can be brought down the snow road to the valley. Mother always says our Lord's the greatest of all road-masters, for He can make roads and make it easy to bring the wood where no man can."

"You have a good mother. Give her my love, and when I again go to the mountains, I shall visit her."

"Oh, if you only would!"

"And now," resumed the queen, "tell me how you pass your time during the winter."

"When the housework for the day is done, the women spin. The men spend the day in the forest, cutting

wood, and, when night comes, they're so tired that they hardly ever cut kindling-wood."

"And do you sing much at such times?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"And do you never read to each other?"

"No, never. But we like to tell stories, and frighten each other as much as we can."

"And do you sometimes dance?"

"Yes, at carnival time; but there's not much of that nowadays. They say it used to be much better in old times."

"Do you never find the day hang heavy on your hands?"

"No, never; we've no time for that."

The queen smiled when she looked at the astral lamp that stood on the table, and thought of the many expedients that society employed to kill time.

The queen at length said: "And do you feel quite sure that your husband is always true to you? Do you never think of his being otherwise?"

"Mother often says that the men are all good for nothing, but she says my Hansei's not like the rest of 'em. He'd be heartily ashamed of himself if he spoke a loving word to another woman. It would haunt him day and night, and he'd never be able to look any one in the face again. He's not one of your sharp, clever folks—far from it; but he's good, thoroughly good at heart; a little bit close in money matters, and he's always afraid that, some time or other, we might come to want. However, one who has to save every kreutzer can easily get used to that. But, thank God, that's over, now."

When Walpurga had once begun to talk, she would, unless interrupted, run on like a mountain spring. She had a thousand and one little stories to tell.—How she had, for the first time, bought three geese, two white and one gray; how many feathers she got from them, and what a good price she obtained for the feathers; and that she now had eight ducks—they were much more useful than geese, and required but little food; and that her goat was wondrous clever. They had once had a sheep, but that was nothing. They belong in flocks and

don't thrive well alone. At last, Walpurga said that she could hardly believe that they really had two cows of their own in the stable. She had never, in all her life, even wished for so much. And then she spoke of the innkeeper and said that, although one couldn't trust him, it was necessary to keep on good terms with him, for, if he was your enemy, you might as well be put out of the village and the principal house would be closed to you. The innkeeper would, once in a while, do you a favor, if he lost nothing by it. He had paid a good price for her ducks and fish, and if you should happen to need it, you could always get a little from him on trust. She didn't want to speak ill of him, but he had once been impudent to her; but she had taught him a lesson that he'd remember as long as he lived. She hoped the queen wouldn't do anything to him for that; he was good enough, after all, considering that he was an innkeeper. But there were ever so many good people in their neighborhood. They didn't give anything away, and she wouldn't want their gifts, but when you know that on every hillside there are people who feel kindly toward you, it makes the whole neighborhood seem as if it were one warm room.

The queen smiled.

Walpurga went on talking. The more she talked, the more the child prattled and crowed and clapped its hands; the sound of his nurse's voice pleased him, and Walpurga said:

"He's just like a canary-bird; when there's lots of chattering in the room, he joins in with his merry song. Isn't it so, you canary-bird?" said she, shaking her head at the child, while it crowed yet more lustily than before.

Buried in thought, the queen passed her hand over her face several times. Walpurga's words had transported her into another world. And so, thought she, there are other beings, beneath me and far away, who pass their days in work and care and yet are happy.

"What makes you look so sad?" asked Walpurga.

Her question had recalled the queen to herself. No one had ever read her face in this way. No one could, or would have questioned her thus.

The queen made no answer, and Walpurga continued:

"Oh, my dear queen, I can't help thinking you must have a hard time of it. To have plenty of everything isn't so good for one after all. It's like having your heaven on earth. Have you never felt lonely and lorn? When one wakes to sorrow and thinks that one still has sound limbs, and can work, and can see the sun and know that there are still good people in the world—it's then that you really feel at home in the world. Oh, my dear queen, don't be sad. You couldn't, if you knew how happy you ought to feel."

The queen was silent for a long while. There must have been something in Walpurga that suggested the thought, for she at last said: "They play William Tell to-night. I would like you to go to the theater, for once."

Walpurga said:

"I'd like to go, well enough. Mademoiselle Kramer has told me a great deal about it; it must be splendid, but I can't take the child with me, and I can't leave it alone for so long a time. See how he listens, and what a cross voice he has already. He understands everything we say, I'll bet my head on it."

The boy began to cry. Walpurga took him up in her arms, fondled him and sang:

I won't leave you a minute,
To see the finest play;
It's better far, and safer,
If at home with you I stay.

The little prince was soon quieted and fell asleep.

"Yes, you're right," said the queen, after a pause. "Remain just as you are, and when you go home again, don't think of what is past. Only think that your lot is the best in the world."

The queen left. Walpurga felt like telling Mademoiselle Kramer that the queen was very sad, and was about to ask what could be the matter; but, with clever tact, she refrained from alluding to the subject. The queen had been so confiding and so sisterly with her, that it would not do to speak of it to any one else; and perhaps, too, the queen did not wish others to know that she was sad.

For many days, there was a pilgrimage of court ladies and gentlemen to Walpurga for the sake of seeing something that was quite new to them. Doctor Gunther had given Walpurga permission to get a distaff and spin. To see a spinning-wheel in use seemed like a fairy-tale. Few of the ladies and gentlemen had ever seen such a thing before, and now they came and looked on wonderingly. Walpurga, however, always laughed merrily when she wound a fresh thread on the spindle. All the court came to look at the distaff, and Schoning declared that this was the implement with which, Little Thornrose had injured herself.

Irma was again the object of envy, for she, too, knew how to spin and, like a village neighbor, would sometimes come and join threads for Walpurga. They both sat spinning at the same distaff, and, while they worked, their voices joined in merry songs.

"What's to be done with what we spin?" asked Irma.

Walpurga was vexed, for the question had destroyed the charm. She said: "Little shirts for my prince; but they must only be of my spinning." After that, she laid the bobbins which Irma had filled in a separate place. The threads which she had moistened with her own lips, should be the only ones used by the prince.

Irma could not help telling Baron Schoning of Walpurga's plan, and it suggested to him, a poem, in which he alluded to the legend of a fairy, or enchanted princess, who was spinning flax for her darling. The queen was delighted with the poem, and, for the first time, and with perfect sincerity, praised the Baron's verses.

Walpurga was sitting at her distaff and telling the prince in the cradle the story of the King of the Carps, who swims about at the bottom of the lake. He's more than seven thousand years old, wears a crown on his head, has a great long beard and, up over him, millions of fishes are swimming about and playing tag with each other and when one's naughty and envious and quarrelsome and disobedient, the naughty pike comes and eats him, and then comes the fisherman who catches the pike, and then comes the cook who cuts up the pike, and then all the little fishes jump out and go back into the lake

and come to life and tell all that's happened to them, how dark it was in the pike's belly, and how much brighter it is in the sea and, in the mean while, the pike is cut in pieces and eaten, and if one's not very careful, he'll get a fish-bone in his mouth, and that'll make him cough, and Walpurga coughed with great skill.

The door suddenly opened and, to Walpurga's great alarm, a handsome young officer entered, went straight up to her, saluted her in military fashion, and, while twirling his mustache, asked:

"Have I the honor of addressing the magic spinner, named Walpurga Andermatten, from the cottage by the lake?"

"Yes; dear me, what can be the matter?"

"I am sent by the spirit Kussschmatzky, and he commands me to kiss you three times in order to break a spell."

Walpurga trembled. It was her own fault. Why had she told the child so many fairy-tales, and now it had all come true. All at once, the officer threw his arms about her neck, and kissed her with all his might, and then laughed until he could no longer stand, and seating himself, exclaimed:

"And so you really don't know me? That's splendid. Don't you know your friend Irma, any more?"

"You rogue! You good-for-nothing rogue," burst out Walpurga. "Pardon me, Countess Irma, but who'd have thought of such a thing; and you threw me into such a fright! What's it all about? Is it carnival time already?"

"Walpurga, if you understood the language, you might see me in a French play this evening. The king is also going to act. I'm sorry, for I'd rather had you in the audience than any of the rest. But I've had sufficient applause already; you didn't know me. I'm glad of that at all events."

"And I'm heartily sorry," said Walpurga, becoming quite serious. "Oh, dear Countess, do you know what you're doing? It's the greatest sin to put on men's clothes, for then the devil's master over one. Don't laugh at me! I'm not so silly as you think. It's just as true as can be. Grubersepp's grandfather had a daugh-

ter, and she had a sweetheart who was off at the wars, and while she was sitting in the room spinning, just as I was a little while ago, a girl dressed herself up in soldier's clothes, and went into the room and acted just as if she was the sweetheart himself. Grubersepp's daughter fainted, but got over it again and the disguised girl ran away. And as soon as she got out of the house, there were hundreds of men with whips and horses' heads, and they chased her ever so far and, at last, the devil caught her, tore her to pieces and threw her into the lake. Yes, it's a true story; you can take my word for it. There are people enough living to this day who knew her."

"You're enough to make one quite melancholy," said Irma.

"Perhaps such things only happen with us," said Walpurga, as if to console her. "The soldiers out there, with their swords and muskets, wouldn't let the devil enter here; but, my dear, good Countess, don't you feel ashamed to wear those clothes before so many people?"

"You belong to a different world from ours. You're right, and so are we," said Irma, walking up and down the room quickly and rattling her spurs. "No, Walpurga, don't alarm yourself about me, and don't take your fright so much to heart."

She was again the same careless, true-hearted creature that she had ever been, and Walpurga could not help saying:

"Oh, how beautiful! you look just like a prince."

Walpurga's eyes rested on the door long after Irma had left. It seemed to her as if it had all been a dream.

Many days passed by, and Irma was always blithe and cheerful when with Walpurga. They would sing and spin, and the king and queen once came together—they had never done so before—and seated themselves by the child's cradle, while they looked at, and listened to, the workers. Walpurga was timid at first, but, after a while, sang quite cheerfully.

A veritable surprise was in store for Walpurga. Christmas eve arrived. The manner in which it was observed at her home, had been transplanted hither by the queen. Walpurga and the child were conducted into the great

saloon, where the Christmas tree was all ablaze with lights, and where there also were many rich presents.

It seemed to her as if she were in a fairy grotto; there was so much glitter and sparkle, and the presents were so rich and varied. The child shouted for joy and was ever putting out its little hands to grasp the lights. Walpurga received lavish gifts, but, although the dazzling gold and the rich garnet necklace with golden clasp delighted her, a well-arranged table covered with clothing pleased her more than all the rest. There was a complete winter suit for Walpurga's mother, another, with a beautiful green hat, for Hansei, and many articles of clothing for little Burgei.

"Does it all please you?" asked the queen. "I sent to your village to get the measure."

"Oh, how it does please me!" said Walpurga; "If I could thank you as many times as there are threads in these clothes, it wouldn't be enough."

A thought suddenly occurred to her, and she sent Baum to her room to get the yarn which was hanging there. He soon returned with it and, presenting it to the queen, in the king's presence, she said: "As often as I've wetted each thread with my lips, do I thank you. I shall pray for you as long as I can move my lips, and all will go well with you."

The king held out his hand to her and said: "You're a good soul, but don't excite yourself so." She pressed his hand firmly.

Walpurga was sitting in her room, late at night, when the queen came to her.

"I'm glad you've come," said Walpurga, softly.

"Why? Does anything ail the child?"

"No; thank God, he's quiet. See how he clenches his little fists while he sleeps. But, on this night, at twelve, a Sunday child sees everything. He can hear all that the angels in heaven and the beasts in the wood are saying. One must always be with him at that time, and keep on saying the paternoster, and then no harm will come to him."

"Yes, I'll stay with you; that can do no harm. But you must not torment yourself so with your belief."

Walpurga looked at the queen with a strange expression.

"Ah, she knows nothing of this," she thought to herself. "She wasn't born in our faith." The queen said: "I'm glad that I can make so many people happy, just as I've made you happy, to-day."

"But you must be happy, too," said Walpurga. "Take my word for it—I'd put my hand in the fire as a pledge—there's nothing wrong with Irma. She's true, and so is the king."

The queen started convulsively. And had it come to this pass? Must she receive consolation from such a quarter? She sat there motionless, for some time. The clock struck twelve, and, at the same instant, bells were heard ringing from every tower filling the air with their merry sounds.

The child in the cradle began to mutter in its sleep. Walpurga made a sign to the queen and went on repeating the Lord's Prayer, in a firm voice. The queen moved her lips and silently joined in the prayer. When it was repeated for the third time, she said aloud: "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Then she knelt down by the child's cradle, and buried her face in the pillow.

Walpurga was filled with reverence for the mother who thus knelt silently at her child's cradle. She went on praying in a low voice. The queen arose, nodded to Walpurga, and waved both her hands to her. She looked almost like a spirit, and, without uttering another word, she left the room. The sound of the bells died on the air, and the child slept on quietly.

CHAPTER VII.

STRANGE things were always happening during the the days and nights of Christmas week. Some mortals maintain that the kingdom of the fairies has vanished, but it still exists.

In a large building, standing back from the king's street, there are silent workmen, placing strange wedges side by

side, which wedges are afterward handed over to a huge monster. It is still at rest, but as soon as it receives them, it suddenly moves, creaks, groans and puffs, and, in an instant, hundreds of human beings are, as it were, created anew.—In other words, it is the government printing-office, and they are printing the official gazette, which at the beginning of every year, announces the promotion and the orders conferred upon hundreds of individuals.

What is New Year's day to most mortals? Retrospection, reflections that life is but transitory, succeeded by joy at what is still left us, and good resolutions for the future; and yet to-morrow is a mere repetition of yesterday.

How different with those whose importance depends upon their station, and who can be elevated into something more than they now are.

The official gazette appeared, with its list of New Year's gifts. One pleasure fell to the lot of the queen. Her English teacher, an estimable and noble hearted old man, whom she had brought with her as her private secretary, received the title of privy councilor, and was thus, in a social sense, rendered capable of being presented at court.

But of all the promotions, none excited so much comment at court and in the capital, as the appointment of Baron Schoning to the office of intendant-general of the royal theater, and he, himself, was more surprised than all others. Although he had been greatly applauded for his share in the French play, in which Irma had also taken part, he had not anticipated such a result. When he read the announcement, he rubbed his eyes, to make sure of being awake. Was it a bit of royal pleasantry? He would willingly submit to any joke, but then it must be in a confined circle, not in the eyes of the world. But it was not a joke, it was the simple truth, for, side by side with his own, he could read of the appointment and the promotion of many distinguished men to important positions.

It was an actual fact—beautiful reality.

In the city it was said, with a significant smile, that the baron had received the appointment in order to place him

in the proper position to marry Countess Irma. Others, who were less kindly disposed, asserted that it was freely offered to the gallant court fool, as the court had always regarded theatrical matters as a sort of time-honored buffoonery, furnishing amusement of a light and trivial character.

But Baron Schoning—or, as he must now be styled, the intendant—received the visits of his subordinates with great dignity and then drove to the palace.

On the way, he was obliged to pass Countess Irma's apartments. He stopped and sent in his card.

The countess received him kindly, and offered him her sincere congratulations. He plainly intimated that he, in a great measure, owed his promotion to her, and he remarked that a lady of good taste and true artistic feeling could be his greatest aid and support in his new calling. She affected not to understand him and assented, in an absent manner. Her thoughts were wandering. She would often look out of the window that opened on the park. The snow had almost disappeared and the marble statues of gods and goddesses had thrown off their winter covering. Nearest her window, and in a position which showed its profile, stood the Venus de Milo.

"Pardon me," said she, at last, as if collecting her thoughts, "I am delighted that you have again resumed your connection with art, and would be very glad to have a talk with you on the subject. Above all things, let me beg of you to let us have music again at the theater: if not during the *entr'actes*, before the performance, at all events."

"The musicians are all opposed to such a course."

"I know that very well. Each art endeavors to isolate itself, to remain independent of all others. But a play without music is like a feast without wine. Music cleanses the soul from the dust and dross of every-day life and seems to say to every one: 'You are no longer in your office, in the barracks, or in the workshop.' If it could be done, I would prescribe a special costume for all who frequent the theater. Their uncovered heads should be a token of spiritual reverence, and, besides that, I would have theatrical performances only once a week."

"You are perfectly right as regards the music," interposed the intendant. "If you have any other suggestion, dear Countess—"

"Some other time. I know of nothing at present. Just now, my mind is full of the *bal costumé*, which is to take place next week."

The ball was to be given in the palace and the adjoining winter garden. The intendant now informed Irma of his plan, and was delighted to find that she approved of it. At the end of the garden, he intended to erect a large fountain, ornamented with antique groups. In the foreground, he meant to have trees and shrubbery and various kinds of rocks, so that none could approach too closely, and the background was to be a Grecian landscape, painted in the grand style.

Irma promised to keep his secret. Suddenly, she exclaimed: "We are, all of us, no better than lackeys and kitchen-maids. We are kept busy, stewing, roasting and cooking for weeks, in order to prepare a dish that may please their majesties."

The intendant made no reply.

"Do you remember," continued Irma, "how, when we were at the lake, we spoke of the fact that man possessed the advantage of being able to change his dress, and thus to alter his appearance? While yet a child, masquerading was my greatest delight. The soul wings its flight in callow infancy. A *bal costumé* is, indeed, one of the noblest fruits of culture. The love of coquetry which is innate with all of us, there displays itself undisguised."

The intendant took his leave; while walking away, his mind was filled with his old thoughts about Irma.

"No," said he to himself, "such a woman would be a constant strain, and would require one to be brilliant and intellectual all day long. She would exhaust one," said he, almost aloud.

No one knew what character Irma intended to appear in, although many supposed that it would be as Victoria, since it was well known that she stood for the model of the statue that surmounted the arsenal. They were busy conjecturing how she could assume that character, without violating the social proprieties.

Irma spent much of her time in the atelier and worked assiduously. She was unable to escape a feeling of unrest, far greater than that she had experienced years ago, when looking forward to her first ball. She could not reconcile herself to the idea of preparing for the fête, so long beforehand, and would like to have had it take place in the very next hour, so that something else might be taken up at once. The long delay tried her patience. She almost envied those beings to whom the preparation for pleasure affords the greatest part of the enjoyment. Work alone calmed her unrest. She had something to do, and this prevented the thoughts of the festival from engaging her mind during the day. It was only in the evenings that she would recompense herself for the day's work, by giving full swing to her fancy.

The statue of Victory was still in the atelier and was almost finished. High ladders were placed beside it. The artist was still chiseling at the figure and would, now and then, hurry down to observe the general effect and then hastily mount the ladder again in order to add a touch here or there. Irma scarcely ventured to look up at this effigy of herself in Grecian costume—transformed and yet herself. The idea of being thus translated into the purest of art's forms filled her with a tremor—half joy, half fear.

It was on a winter afternoon, Irma was working assiduously at a copy of a bust of Theseus, for it was growing dark.

Near her, stood her preceptor's marble bust of Doctor Gunther. All was silent; not a sound was heard save, now and then, the picking or scratching of the chisel. At that moment, the master descended the ladder and, drawing a deep breath, said:

"There—that will do. One can never finish. I shall not put another stroke to it. I am afraid that retouching would only injure it. It is done."

In the master's words and manner, struggling effort and calm content seem mingled. He laid the chisel aside. Irma looked at him earnestly and said:

"You are a happy man; but I can imagine that you are still unsatisfied. I don't believe that even Raphael or

Michael Angelo were ever satisfied with the work they had completed. The remnant of dissatisfaction which an artist feels at the completion of a work, is the germ of a new creation."

The master nodded his approval of her words. His eyes expressed his thanks. He went to the hydrant and washed his hands. Then he placed himself near Irma and looked at her, while telling her that, in every work, an artist parts with a portion of his life; that the figure, will never again inspire the same feelings that it did while in the workshop. Viewed from afar, and serving as an ornament, no regard would be had to the care bestowed upon details. But the artist's great satisfaction in his work is in having pleased himself; and yet no one can accurately determine how, or to what extent, a conscientious working up of details will influence the general effect.

While the master was speaking, the king was announced. Irma hurriedly spread a damp cloth over her clay model.

The king entered. He was unattended, and begged Irma not to allow herself to be disturbed in her work. Without looking up, she went on with her modeling. The king was earnest in his praise of the master's work.

"The grandeur that dwells in this figure will show posterity what our days have beheld. I am proud of such contemporaries."

Irma felt that the words applied to her as well. Her heart throbbed. The plaster of Paris which stood before her suddenly seemed to gaze at her with a strange expression.

"I should like to compare the finished work with the first models," said the king to the artist.

"I regret that the experimental models are in my small atelier. Does Your Majesty wish me to have them brought here?"

"If you will be good enough to do so."

The master left. The king and Irma were alone. With rapid steps, he mounted the ladder and exclaimed, in a tremulous voice:

"I ascend into heaven—I ascend to you. Irma, I kiss you, I kiss your image, and may this kiss forever rest upon

those lips, enduring beyond all time. I kiss thee, with the kiss of eternity."

He stood aloft and kissed the lips of the statue. Irma could not help looking up, and, just at that moment, a slanting sunbeam fell on the king and on the face of the marble figure, making it glow as if with life.

Irma felt as if wrapped in a fiery cloud, bearing her away into eternity.

The king descended and placed himself beside her. His breathing was short and quick—she did not dare to look up—she stood as silent and as immovable as the statue. Then the king embraced her—she lay in his arms and living lips kissed each other.

When the artist returned, the king was alone. Irma crossed the street, on her way to the palace, as if dreaming. She felt herself borne on wings, and likened herself to Semele whom the ardent kisses of Jupiter had made immortal.

"The greatest happiness has been mine," said she to herself. "I can easily give up all else, for the kiss of eternity rests upon my lips."

The people and the houses seemed like so many shadowy forms, and she felt as if flying through the air above them.

It was not until she had gained her apartment and beheld her costume, that she was reminded of the ball that was to take place that very night. Her lips were wreathed in smiles, while her maid attired her in the full, cloud-like, white robe, trimmed with rushes set with diamonds.

"My lady promised the crown prince's nurse," said the maid, "that she should see her in her ball-dress. Shall I send for her now?"

Irma nodded assent. All that she heard seemed as if in a dream; all that she saw, as if in a cloud. She felt it a torture to be obliged to display herself to so many people. She wished to appear to him only. To him who was all the world to her.

Walpurga came, and gazed upon her like one entranced. There stood a maiden, so beautiful, so charming, so brilliantly and wonderfully encircled with reeds, and with diamond drops hanging from those reeds and from red

coral branches. The girdle was a green serpent, with large glittering diamond eyes that sparkled so that it dazzled one's eyes to look at them. Her long hair was loosened, and fell down over her bare neck. It was held together at the top by a wreath of water-lilies glittering with dew-drops, and on her brow was a star which flashed and sparkled, while the face of the beautiful maiden was more radiant than all her jewels. Irma had never before looked so beautiful. She seemed so noble, so far away, as if smiling, from the clouds above, upon mortals below.

"Dear me! Why, you're the Lady of the Lake," exclaimed Walpurga.

"Ah! So you recognize me," said Irma, holding out her hand. Her voice sounded strangely.

Walpurga pressed her hand to her heart. She felt grieved that Irma should assume this character. It was defying God, and would end in evil. But Walpurga said nothing; she merely folded her hands and moved her lips in silent prayer for Irma.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, after passing her hand across her eyes, "dear me, how the people can fix themselves up. Where do they get everything from? How is it possible?" She walked round and round Irma.

"When I tell 'em at home, they'll never believe I've seen anything like this. The Lady of the Lake wears an undergarment of sea-foam and loose hair just like this. If only mother and Hansei were here."

Irma made no reply. She walked about the room, and when she saw herself reflected in the great mirrors her own figure seemed like a strange apparition, and the rustling of the reeds bewildered her.

"I would like to jump into the lake, just as I am, and quench the burning flames," thought she to herself.

Walpurga seemed dazzled by so much splendor, and returned to her apartments.

"I can easily imagine," she said to herself, "that the people here don't understand the world, and that the queen herself doesn't understand it, either. They make a new world every day, and turn everything upside down and inside out, and disguise and mask themselves. How are they ever to get rest and keep their senses? The

queen's right; it's better that I should go home again. I'd go crazy here."

When Walpurga reached her room, she found a letter from home awaiting her. She had been joyfully looking forward to this letter for weeks. She had fancied how delighted her mother and Hansei would be, and how the villagers would come and admire their new clothes, and express their astonishment. She had placed a cheerful letter in the breast-pocket of Hansei's jacket, and this was the answer. Stasi had written it, but the mother had dictated every word. It read thus:

"Oh, child, I'm sure you meant well enough, but it didn't turn out well. I and Hansei wore the beautiful clothes when we went to church on New Year's day. I didn't want to; I felt sure something would happen; but Hansei said we must put them on, for the king would think ill of it, if we didn't wear the clothes he sent us, and so, for peace's sake, I went to church with him. But the people kept looking at us so strangely, and didn't say a word; and after church, they were standing together in crowds and we could hear them say, while they pointed their fingers at us: 'It's all very fine. Such things can be got at the capital, but every one knows how; not in an honest way, that's certain. The old fool and that block-head there are proud of it in the bargain, and show off their new clothes.' Old Zenza was worse than any of them, and people who never listen to her at other times, were quite willing to hear all she had to say, and urged her to go on.

"Oh, my dear child! you don't know how bad people can be. I know that you're good, but some people are bad and begrudge one everything, and what they can't take from you they befoul. You meant well enough, I'm sure, but I won't even venture out of the house in my own clothes now. The people are so envious, so cunning and so willing to speak evil. As long as you're poor you know nothing of it, but now I see it. And, dear child, that's not the worst of it. The worst of all is that they want to fill one's heart with mistrust, but I have none toward you; I know you're good. Remain so, and bear

in mind, that if your heart is troubled you can't find rest, though you sleep in a golden bed and on pillows of silk. It were far better to lie on thorns, or in the grave. The innkeeper came and offered to buy the clothes for himself and his wife, but I won't let him have them. And now, dear child, keep honest, and don't touch a thread or a penny to which any evil clings. I know you wouldn't do it, but I can't help telling you; and don't take it so much to heart that people are so bad, and I shan't either."

Walpurga cried bitterly while she read the letter. "The peasants are the worst people in the world," thought she. "Of course, there are bad people among the court folk, but they're not that bad. Just let one of 'em come again and ask for pardon. I'll send them home again." She felt like asking the king to have a sound thrashing administered to every one of the villagers. She only wished that the king's power could be hers for one short hour, so that she might show these silly, infamous people who really was their master.

CHAPTER VIII.

WALPURGA was sitting in her room, weeping with anger. Now and then she would clench her fists and speak her mind to the folks at home, in such a manner that they would have trembled with fear, if they could only have heard her.

But she soon regained her self-control and repressed all emotion, lest the excitement occasioned by the wicked folk at home should injuriously affect the child.

Meanwhile, there were sounds of music far away in the brightly illuminated and elegant apartments of the palace, and also in the winter garden. There were thousands of lights, a perfect sea of velvets and silks, pearls and diamonds, flowers and wreaths, and smiling, joyous faces; but the king outshone them all.

He knew that he was handsome, and took an almost childlike delight in the fact. He was always in a good humor when attired in becoming uniform. At the great *fêtes* which were given on the various regimental anni-

versaries, he always wore the uniform of the regiment thus honored. He was best pleased with himself, when in the dress of the hussars, for that displayed his fine figure to great advantage. On this occasion, he appeared in the fantastic costume of the mythic king Artus, in a golden coat of mail and flowing purple mantle. At his side, was the queen, refined and delicate as a lily, and wearing a light, flowing white veil.

The king observed the pleased expression of all who beheld him. He was happy, for he knew that their admiration was not flattery. When Irma first saw him and made her obeisance to the royal couple, it required all her self-command, to refrain from sinking on her knees at his feet. Then she looked up into his face, with a happy, beseeching air.

She could scarce refrain from expressing her admiration and devotion.

The queen greeted her cordially, and said:

"I am sorry, Irma, that you can't see yourself; you're enough to make one believe in miracles."

The king said nothing, but Irma felt his glance resting upon her. She could not conceive how it was that his glances and the queen's words did not destroy her. With an effort to regain her composure, she said:

"Ah, Your Majesty, I find my costume oppressive. A spirit should stay but a minute and then vanish in a burst of flame."

"There is a minute which is as eternity."

Irma had, indeed, felt a conscious pride in her beautiful appearance, but now she experienced a higher joy. He who was so tall and handsome, a knight more perfect than fancy could devise, could give the kiss of eternity; for he alone, was the highest embodiment of the idea of royalty.

Irma scarcely noticed what was going on about her.

The royal couple passed on, and Irma, in spite of her splendid attire, felt as if deserted and forlorn. The king was no longer near her. In the distance she could still see him, radiant as a god.

Those who were near Irma, praised her ingenious and poetical costume. She did not hear a word of what was

said. The queen sent for her. The king had wished the queen to open the ball with him, but she had declined. He always asked her, as a matter of form, but she never danced.

She now begged Irma to open the ball in her stead.

Irma bowed her thanks, but a proud feeling of superiority filled her breast. "You have nothing to give me. It is I who am giving. It is I who am renouncing. He is mine. The priest gave him to you; nature has given him to me. You are a tender, delicate flower, but we are eagles, who soar into the clouds."

She could hardly conceive how she could bear it all. Every drop of blood in her veins had turned to fire.

The quadrille began.

Irma felt the king's warm breath against her cheek. He pressed her hand, indulged in various pleasantries, and remarked that it was charming to be able to indulge one's fancy in conjuring up a fantastic world. Irma felt that both she and the king would have liked to speak of far different things, and that, indeed, silence was even more eloquent than speech; but they were obliged to talk, and of indifferent subjects at that. Whenever the king's hand touched hers, she felt as if she must suddenly fly aloft with him; and, whenever he removed it, as if she must sink. They came near throwing the whole quadrille into confusion.

The queen left the ball at an early hour. The king accompanied her, but soon returned.

Irma went about the room, but the gay scene seemed like a confused dream. At last she met her brother and his wife, who were richly attired, and greeted them with a pleasant smile. She was forever asking herself: "Do I still live? where am I? who am I?" She had descended through the air, and was floating in a strange world, in which there were only two human beings—he and she; the first, the only human pair. The gods have again descended upon earth, and his kiss is eternity.

She sat with her brother and his wife, in a bower under a pine-tree. Presently, the king approached. In her heart, she rushed forth to embrace him, exclaiming: "Let us die together! Thou art mine and I am thine. We

quently passed his hand over his brows as if to smooth them, and it was his wont to indulge in this movement whenever he felt it necessary to repress his excitement. His first thought had been: Is she really ignorant that the play has, for many years, been a forbidden one? Perhaps she is, for those who measure life by their own feelings have no sense for historic data. But suddenly a thought occurred to him—and he again stroked his eyebrows—it is an intrigue, and she is capable of it. She means to lay a trap *à la* Hamlet, in order to see what effect the play will have upon us. But no, thought he to himself, in that case, she would be obliged to surprise us, and that's not her way. But anger and violence and a rebuking conscience struggled within him. His persistent devotion to the illustrated journals made it seem as if, while in the midst of the company, he had withdrawn into a private box. The king had never before, while in his private circle, read so uninterruptedly. It had been his wont to look now at this, and now at another picture, and to hand it to others for notice or comparison. But, on this evening, he read and yet knew not what he read. He would gladly have caught Irma's eye, and felt happy when he heard her expressing herself so unconstrainedly. He admired her, and would gladly have looked round to her, but dared not even smile approval of her words. He had left Schnabelsdorf's remarks unanswered, and must, therefore, seem not to have heard Irma's.

The queen arose. All stood up with a sense of relief, for every one had felt opposed, although the evening had proven a cheerful one. Before withdrawing, the queen made Schnabelsdorf happy by telling him how grateful they ought to feel toward him, since he was always able to introduce such charming subjects of conversation. Then, addressing the intendant, she said in a voice louder than was her wont:

"If it is any trouble to study 'Emilia Galotti'—"

"Oh, no, Your Majesty."

"I mean if the time's too short."

"There's ample time," replied the intendant. He had already determined how he would cast the play, and in-

tended to try the novel experiment of using the costume of the last century.

"I think," said the queen, while her voice assumed an expression which was foreign to it, "that you might give us 'Nathan the Wise' or 'Minna von Barnhelm,' if you think they can be produced more effectively."

"Let it be as it is," exclaimed the king, suddenly. "Let 'Emilia Galotti' be the play, and have the bills read: 'By royal command.'"

The king offered his arm to the queen, and, accompanied by her, withdrew. The rest of the company bowed low and soon afterward separated for the night. Those who lived without the palace got into their carriages; the rest retired to their apartments, and, although indifferent and unimportant topics had but recently engaged them, every one was busied with his own thoughts on one and the same subject.

Irma dismissed her maid as soon as possible; then, taking up a dust-covered volume of Lessing, she opened and closed the book several times in order to shake off the dust, and, at one sitting, read the whole of "Emilia Galotti."

She did not fall asleep until near morning, and, when she awoke, hardly knew where she was. The open book still lay before her; the lights had gone out of themselves, for she had forgotten to put them out, and the air in her apartment was close and almost stifling.

At about the same time that Irma awoke, bitter tears were being shed in the theater. The intendant had assigned "Emilia Galotti" to a new cast, had taken the *rôle* of Emilia from the leading actress, who had looked upon the part as hers in perpetuity, and had given it to a more youthful performer. The *rôle* of Claudia had been assigned to the elder actress, who sat weeping behind a side-scene, exclaiming; "Pearls mean tears, but tears do not mean pearls." The intendant, though generally kind and amiable, was unrelenting.

But Baum was far more unhappy than the dissatisfied actress. For she was still permitted to take part in the performance, while he, on account of the mishap with the cup, was no longer allowed to remain near their majesties.

He deplored his misfortune to Walpurga, and she begged the queen that Baum might again be restored to favor. On the second evening, the queen inquired if the lackey Baum was ill. He was saved. Full of gratitude, he went to Walpurga and said:

"I'll never forget you for this: you've served me for life."

"I'm glad I've been able, for once, to do you a favor."

"I'll repay you some time or other, depend upon it."

Baum hurriedly withdrew, for Irma entered the room. The king came in soon afterward. He was about to speak French with Irma, but she begged him not to do so, saying:

"Simplicity is very susceptible."

"And so-called good-nature," replied the king, "is often full of malice and intrigue. Weakness all at once fancies itself obliged to be very strong."

"We must be gentle for all that," replied Irma. Although they had spoken German before Walpurga, she had not understood a word of what they said.

"I admire the power of my spy," said the king, "and confess that I bow to her, in all humility. I would never have believed such greatness possible."

Irma nodded gently, and replied: "The hero is Hettore Gonzaga, but the true Emilia Galotti loves him with a power which is worthy of him."

"And the true Hettore is neither dilettante nor weakling, and needs no Marinelli."

The relation born of shame and passion received added strength through the cunning and intriguing opposition of the queen, for the choice of the proscribed play was regarded as part of a well-considered plan. It was like a breath of wind, which, instead of extinguishing the flame, fans it. Deep within their hearts, lurked the self-extenuating plea that the queen was not the pure angel she pretended to be.

"I am firmly convinced," said the king, "that Hippocrates conjured the fatal crystal cup into Nausikaa's hand."

"No, Your Majesty," replied Irma, eagerly, "Hippocrates is a thoroughly noble man; somewhat of a pedant,

indeed, but too good and too wise to do anything like that."

The king soon left and, after he had gone, Walpurga said:

"Now, Countess, you might open every vein in my body and I couldn't repeat one word of what you've been saying. I don't understand a word of it."

"Yes, Walpurga," said Irma, "the king's a very learned man, and we have just been talking about a book which was read yesterday."

Walpurga was satisfied.

"I had expected to meet the queen here," said Irma, after a while, passing her hand over her face, as if to change its expression.

"The queen isn't coming to-day," replied Walpurga. "She sent word that she isn't very well. At other times, she never misses being here when we bathe the child, and there's nothing more beautiful either, than such a child in its bath, or right after the bath. It's like a new-born babe, and splashes and shouts and crows. Won't you stop and see it for once? It's a real treat."

Irma declined and soon afterward left the room. Silent and alone, the queen lay in her room. Her heart still trembled with fear of the consequences of what she had done; no, of what had happened without her having really desired it. A dagger had been forced into her hand, as if by invisible fate. She could not, dared not use it; and yet suspicion filled her soul. Suspicion! The word suddenly seemed as if she had never heard it before, just as she had in truth never felt what it meant. Purity and innocence no longer exist. Every joyful word, every cheerful expression, every smile is equivocal. Every harmless remark has a new meaning. It were better to die than cherish suspicion. The blessed gift of fancy which enables its possessor faithfully to realize to himself, and sympathize with, the actions and thoughts of others, now became a consuming flame. Specters appeared before her waking eyes and would not be laid. If the dread truth were only determined. One can take his position against a manifest wrong, but against suspicion there is none. It renders one weak and unsteady; noth-

ing is fixed; the very earth under one's feet seems to tremble.

The queen was not ill. She could easily enough have gone to the apartments of her son; but she could not have looked into his face and smiled—for her heart was filled with a bitter thought against the father.

She arose quickly, and was about to send for the king. She would tell him all. She wished him to release her from the torment of suspicion. She would believe him. She would only ask him honestly to acknowledge whether he was still true and at one with her. "At heart he's frank and truthful," said she to herself, and love for her husband welled up from the depths of her heart. Still, if he but swerved from himself, he has already been untrue: and would he acknowledge it? Can one expect a man to answer on his conscience, when he has already denied that conscience? And if he were to acknowledge the horrible fact, she would still bear it in silence. Anything was better than this suspicion that poisoned her heart and hardened her soul. Could it be that evil, nay, the mere suspicion of evil, destroys everything that lies within its reach?

She sat down again; she could not ask the king.

"Be it so," said she at last; "I must overcome this temptation, and the spirit of truth will lend me strength."

She thought for a moment of making Gunther her confidant. He was her fatherly friend. "But no," she exclaimed to herself, "I am not weak. I will not seek help from others. If I must learn the terrible truth, I will do it by myself; and if it is a delusion, I mean to conquer it unaided."

At table and in the social circle, the queen's behavior toward the king and Irma was more loving than ever. When she looked at her friend, she felt as if she ought to ask forgiveness for having, even for a moment, thought basely of her; but when she was alone she felt her soul carried away toward him and her. She longed to know what they were thinking of, what they were doing or saying.—They were speaking of her, smiling at and ridiculing her. Who knows? perhaps wishing her dead.

She, indeed, wished that she were dead.

CHAPTER X.

“I’M going to the theater this evening,” said Baum to Walpurga, in the afternoon of the 22d of January. “They’re going to play a great piece. What a pity you can’t go, too.”

“I’ve seen enough of masquerading,” replied Walpurga. “I shall stay with my child. He’s the only one in the whole court who can’t disguise himself.”

Every seat in the court theater was occupied long before the beginning of the play, and the lively talking among the audience seemed like the roar of the sea. Many wondered at the words on the play-bill:

“In Commemoration of Lessing’s Birthday

EMILIA GALOTTI

BY ROYAL COMMAND.”

They spoke in hints, but understood each other perfectly. Was the performance intended to refute certain rumors? Would the court attend, and who would form the suite?

Three dull knocks were heard. They were the signal that the court had entered the passage leading from the palace to the theater. Every eye, every opera-glass was directed to the royal box.

The queen entered, radiant with youthful beauty. The nobles who occupied the first tier arose. She bowed graciously, and then sat down, and attentively read the play-bill that was fastened to the front of the box. The king entered soon after and took the seat beside her. He, too, saluted the nobles who were still standing, and who seated themselves at the same time he did, just as if they were part of himself.

The king reached back for his lorgnette, which was handed to him, and surveyed the audience, while the orchestra played the overture. Irma’s wish was realized. Since the new intendant had come into power, there was music at the beginning of the play and during the *entr’actes*.

"Who's sitting behind the queen?"

"Countess von Wildenort."

She wore a single rose in her brown hair. She was exchanging a few complimentary remarks with Colonel Bronnen, and was smiling and showing her pearly teeth.

A young critic in the pit said to his neighbor:

"It is surely not without design that Countess Wildenort, like Emilia Galotti, wears only a single rose in her hair."

There was so much talking during the overture, that those who desired to listen to the music frequently hissed, but without avail; for it was not until the curtain rose that the audience became silent.

It is not until near the end of the first act of the play that there is any occasion for marked applause. The prince's haste and prejudice are shown in his readiness to sign the death-warrant, while the carriage waits for him. Old privy councilor Rota withdraws the document.

In order to mark the festal character of the evening's performance, the intendant had selected music by celebrated composers, for the *entr'actes*. The malicious maintained that this was only done in order to prevent discussion of the play, which had not been performed for many years. If this had really been the intention, the lively conversation, both in the royal box and among the rest of the audience, prevented its success.

In reply to a remark of the king's, the intendant said:

"The rôle of Rota, although insignificant, is quite a graceful one, and, in this, Lessing has proved himself the master. Another advantage is that the part can be played by a veteran."

The queen looked around in surprise—was this mere acting, instead of a living, thrilling fact?

They went on with the play. The scene between Apiani and Marinelli aroused tumultuous applause. The queen never once left her place, although it was her wont between the acts to retire to the *salon* near her box; and Irma, as first maid of honor, was obliged to remain in attendance.

Between the third and fourth acts, the lord steward met Bronnen in the corridor and said: "If they would only

get through with this confounded, democratic play. The sweet rabble down there may become demonstrative." The next act was the fourth, containing the scene between Orsina and Marinelli. The queen held her fan with a convulsive grasp. She saw and heard all that passed on the stage while, with strained attention, she listened to the quickened breathing of Irma, who stood behind her. She longed to turn round suddenly and look into her face, but did not venture to do so. With one and the same glance, she saw the figures on the stage and watched her husband's countenance. Her eyes and ears did double service. It was all she could do to control herself. The play went on. Orsina and Odoardo—if Irma were now to faint—What then? What had she done in having this piece performed?—Orsina hands the dagger to her father, and at last rises into a frenzy of fury. "If we, all of us," she cried, "this whole host of forsaken ones, were transformed into bacchantes and furies, with him in our possession, and were tearing him to pieces and rending the flesh from his limbs—yea, tearing out his vitals in order to find the heart which the traitor promised to each and yet gave to none! Ah, what a dance that would be! That would—"

If Irma should cry out!—The queen clutched the rail of the box with convulsive grasp. She felt as if she, herself, must cry out to the audience.

But all was as silent as before.

When the scene was over, the king, addressing Irma, in a careless tone, said: 'Müller plays excellently, does she not?'

"Wonderfully, Your Majesty, although some parts were overacted. The passage, 'I have nothing to pardon, because I have not been offended,' she gave in too sharp a tone, and her voice seemed unnatural. The sentences of one who had been thus openly humiliated should be more like dagger thrusts; the words should prepare us for the sharp point of the dagger that follows them."

Irma's voice was firm and clear. The queen fanned herself, in order to cool her burning face and prevent herself from betraying her agitation.

One whose conscience reproved her could not have

spoken thus. Her voice must have faltered and the terrible lesson of the play itself must have petrified her, thought the queen, as she turned toward Irma and nodded pleasantly.

I am stronger than I imagined, thought Irma to herself, smoothing her gloves. While she heard Odoardo's words, a mist had arisen before her eyes. If it had been her father—and it might have been he. A cry arose from her heart, but did not pass her lips; and now she was quiet and self-composed. The play progressed without interruption, and, when it was over, the audience were not content until they had twice called the Odoardo of the evening before the curtain. The king joined in the applause.

The court party returned to the palace, and retired to the queen's apartments for tea.

The queen was cheerful, as if she had escaped from some danger. For the first time in a long while her bearing was easy and vivacious. A dread load had been lifted from her heart. She was now free and vowed that she would never more think basely of any one; and, least of all, of her neighbor.

They were at tea, and the queen asked her husband: "And had you also never seen the play before?"

"Oh, yes. I saw it on my travels; I forget where it was." Turning toward the intendant, he added: "I think that the costume of the last century was very appropriate. When I saw the play before, it was in modern attire, which seemed quite out of place. In spite of its classic character, the play has a thin crust of powder which one dare not blow away, lest the whole, both scene and action, become unnatural."

The intendant was delighted.

"How do you like the piece?" asked the king of Gunther.

"Your Majesty, it is one of our classics."

"You're not always so orthodox."

"Nor am I in this case," replied Gunther; "I can safely say that I honor Lessing with all my heart and perhaps, indeed, with undue partiality. But in this play, Lessing had not yet arrived at the repose of freedom. It

is the result of noblest melancholy, and might be termed fragmentary and incomplete; for the account is not closed, and at the end there still remains an unfilled breach. This, however, arises from the fact that a great historical subject taken from the age of the Romans has been transferred to the cabinet and country-seat of a petty Italian prince."

"How do you mean?" enquired the king. Gunther went on to explain:

"In this play, there is a pathos of despair which reaches its climax in the final question: 'Is it not enough that princes are men? Must they also learn that their friends are demons in disguise?' One might assume that this discovery was a punishment that would cling to the prince for life. Henceforth, he must become a changed man. But this epigrammatic confession of his own weakness and of the baseness of those who environ him, does not seem to me a full expiation. A question, and such as this, at the close of a drama whose aim should be to leave us reconciled with eternal and unchanging law, can only be explained by the fact that the keynote of the whole play is sarcastic. He whom certain things will not deprive of his reason, has none to lose. The fault of the play—Lessing's love of truth would court the boldest investigation—the gap, as it were, lay in the fact that Lessing has transferred the act of Virginius from the Roman forum to the modern stage and has given us, instead of the infuriated citizen with knife in hand, the malcontent Colonel Galotti. The act of Virginius was the turning point that led to a great political catastrophe, after which came revolution and expiation. But in Lessing's play, the deed takes place at the end, and leads to no results. It closes with a question, as it were, or rather with an unresolved dissonance."

Although this explanation had, at first, been given in a somewhat acrimonious tone, it gave great satisfaction. It elevated the subject, and the painful impressions awakened by it, into the cool, serene atmosphere of criticism.

"What struck me as peculiar, in the play," said Irma, unable to remain silent, "was that I discovered two marriage stories in it."

"Marriage stories? and two of them?"

"Certainly. Emilia is the offspring of an unfortunate, or, to speak plainly, a bad marriage. Odoardo, with his rude virtue, and Claudia, so yielding, led each other a terrible life and, in the end, parted without scandal. He remained on his estate, while she took the daughter to the city, in order that she might there receive the finishing touches. Emilia was obliged to devote much of her time to the piano. Papa Appiani was, in a moral sense, always on stilts. Madame Claudia was worldly-minded and fond of society. The fruit of this marriage was Emilia, and her marriage with Appiani would have been just like that of her parents."

"Cleverly expounded," said the king, and, encouraged by his praise, Irma continued:

"Emilia's grandmother may have said: 'I am unhappy, but I would like my daughter Claudia to be happy with good Odoardo, who was then but a captain. And in turn, mother Claudia said: 'I am not happy, but my daughter shall be'; and, at a later day, Emilia would have said: 'I am not happy, but my daughter, etc., etc.' It's an everlasting round of misery and resignation. Who is this Mr. Appiani? A splenetic counselor to the embassy, who is out of employ, and merely marries for the sake of the worthy man whom he thus makes his father-in-law, and who, after marriage, would preach to his wife just as Odoardo had done before him, and with just as much effect. Appiani was worth a charge of powder, or even two, as Marinelli thought. Why had he no eye for the toilette of his betrothed? The very next winter, Emilia would have died of *ennui* in the country, or, becoming transformed in spirit, would have founded an infant school on her estate. If Emilia could sing, her melodies would have been like those of Mozart's Zerlina. Masetto Appiani felt that he would not suit, and, although he could not tell why, had good reasons for feeling so bad before the betrothal. Appiani ought to have married a widow with seven children. The man's heart was tender by nature. Had he quarreled with his wife, he would have said, as he did after his dispute with Marinelli: 'Ah, that did me good. It stirred up my blood and now

I feel like a new and better man.' Emilia loves the prince and, therefore, fears him. He who becomes her husband by virtue of the marriage contract, has never possessed her love. I would have chosen Appiani for a parliamentary delegate, but not for a husband. Such a man should either remain unmarried, or else take unto himself a wife who founds soup-kitchens; not an Emilia, who is enough of a coquette to know what becomes her."

Irma's cheeks glowed while she thus spoke. She felt as if riding o'er forest and field on a wild courser. She had begun in bitterness and, yielding to imagination, she went on boldly and fearlessly. She had lost all fear and felt a conscious pride in her sway over life itself and all that surrounded her.

The evening which had threatened dire storms had brought refreshing breezes and a purified atmosphere.

The queen breathed freely once more, and felt happy in the midst of this circle of good and gifted people.

Immediately after the play, Baum had hurried to Walpurga and told her: "Oh, what a play we've had. I wonder they allow them to play anything so free. There's a prince who's just about to marry a princess, and has an old love who's still good-looking. He wants to get rid of her and, in the mean while, tries to procure a new one who is very beautiful and whose marriage is to take place that very day. He has a chamberlain who is his friend, but whom he treats quite roughly if he doesn't bring him what he wants on the instant. He treats him as an inferior and calls him a fool one moment, and embraces him the next. . So the chamberlain manages to have the bridegroom shot dead and the bride carried away. But, all at once, the old love comes and meets the father of Emilia Galotti and sets him on, and the father stabs his daughter, and she drops down dead."

"And what becomes of the prince and the chamberlain?" asked Walpurga.

"I don't know."

"Tell me once more," said Walpurga; "what was the bride's name?"

"There's the play-bill. It's all there."

Walpurga read the bill; the hand with which she held

it trembled. There were names which the king and Irma had mentioned that day, when she had not understood a word of what they were saying.

"And so you've had that story performed. Oh you—The whole pack of you are—I know—"

Mademoiselle Kramer's advice stood her in good stead. Walpurga did not venture to utter the thoughts that filled her mind.

On the following evening, there was a court concert. The large hall in the main building was crowded with men wearing gay uniforms and crosses of various orders, and richly dressed ladies. The select court circle were in the hall, and the guests in the adjoining apartments and galleries.

Those who belonged to the queen's small circle, and who had been together yesterday, greeted each other with a familiar air. They did not keep together to-day. It was their duty to mingle with those guests who were less frequently invited. The king was attired in the uniform of the hussars and was in a happy mood. During the pauses, he would walk through the rooms, speaking to this one and that, and would have a pleasant word for every one. The queen looked as if suffering, and it was evident that it cost her an effort to keep up.

It was Irma's habit to enter into cheerful conversation with the singers, who were always seated on a raised platform separated from the rest of the room. The malicious asserted that she did this, in order to make a parade of her affability; but Irma simply believed it her duty to be kind and affable to the artists.

Doctor Gunther was engaged in conversation with the director of the academy and intendant Schoning. They were discussing designs for paintings to decorate the new parliament house, which had recently been completed by the king's orders. The artist regretted that there was no accepted symbol of the constitution. The conventional antique female figure holding a sheet of paper, was always cold and unsatisfactory.

"You re-awaken an old thought," replied the intendant. "What we lack is the myth-creating power and, if you will allow the expression in this case, the court-directing

power. Just as there is a field marshal, so should there be a court director who—I mean it seriously—should always have precedence in all affairs of importance, and, at court, should always represent the constitution. Believe me, the constitution is not admitted at court. What I mean is, it is not represented and is, therefore, unknown there. Do you not agree with me, privy councilor Gunther?"

Gunther, rousing himself from a reverie, answered: "There's no longer any use in trying to find myths and symbols to represent things which have been weighed and measured and of which we have distinct conceptions. It would be just as unsuccessful as an attempt to represent the goddess of reason."

He spoke in an absent manner, for he was constantly watching Irma. She was about to return to the company, when he advanced toward her. She said: "Ah, nowadays everything is according to programme. In olden times, the king sent for a bard with his harp, and the old man, with his white beard, sang wondrous songs. But now, nothing less than an orchestra and a dozen singers will do, and one has the musical bill of fare in his hand."

Gunther did not seem disposed to enter upon the subject, and replied:

"I've been thinking seriously about what you said yesterday."

"I never think about what was said yesterday."

"But I'm a pendant and can't help it. You're right. Emilia would never have been happy with Appiani."

"I'm glad that you agree with me."

"Do you think that Emilia would have been happy with the prince?"

"Yes."

"And for how long?"

"That I don't know."

"She would soon have been undeceived, for this prince is only a selfish voluptuary, one who steals sweets in love and in life; in a word, a dilettante. As long as a dilettante is young, the grace which is inseparable from the vigor and elasticity of youth, lend him what is called an interesting air. But when he becomes older he copies

himself, repeats the few phrases which he has heard from others or has, perhaps, blundered together for himself, and, as if disguising his soul with rouge, affects the possession of youthful enthusiasm. Beneath the surface, all is withered, empty, decayed and fragile. It is not without reason that Lessing depicted Hettore as young and handsome, and on the eve of consummating a lawful marriage. He is ready to make Appiani ambassador to his father. Are you not of my opinion?" asked Gunther at last. He noticed that Irma seemed unwilling to answer.

"Oh, excuse me," said she; "I've drunk so deeply of the music of to-day that I've no memory left for the dry affairs of yesterday."

She took leave of him with a pleasant smile and disappeared in the throng.

CHAPTER XI.

ALTHOUGH its advent had been preceded by much gayety and merriment, there were quiet times at court during the carnival season.

The queen was ill.

The excitement of the last few weeks had greatly impaired her strength, and it was feared that her life was in danger.

Irma now spent most of her time in the queen's apartments, and when, at rare intervals, she visited Walpurga, looked pale and worn.

Walpurga still kept on spinning, and the child thrived amazingly.

"Oh, how true were our good queen's words! 'God be praised, my child!' said she to the prince, one day, 'that you're healthy and away from me. You live for yourself, alone.' Yes, she's looked deep into every one's heart, and I think she's too good for this world. Mother's said, a thousand times, that the Lord soon calls those who are always good, and who never get downright angry and furious. Oh, if I could only take my prince home with me! Spring'll soon be here. Oh God! if he were to lose his mother and me too!"

Thus did Walpurga express herself to Mademoiselle Kramer, who found it no easy matter to console her.

Baum so managed it that there was always something for him to do in the crown prince's apartments. He was no longer importunate, but simply grateful and obliging, in his attentions to Walpurga. He was determined to gain her sympathy, for that was worth more to him than aught else. And now when Walpurga confided her trouble to him, he said:

"Do I wish you well?"

"Yes, I can't deny that you do," replied Walpurga.

"Then listen to what I've got to tell you. There's nothing more tiresome, or niggardly, than a good, simple marriage; that is, what they call a 'good marriage.' What does one get by it? Wages, a tip, once in a while from a stranger, or a few bottles of wine which one can make away with. In Baroness Steigeneck's time, it was quite different, for then the valets de chambre and every one about the place grew rich, and had houses in the town, and owned mortgages and estates. But now, thank God, it'll soon be different again."

"I don't know what you mean," said Walpurga.

"I wish I were in your place, only for one hour," replied Baum. "She thinks more of you than she does of any one. It was here that they came to an understanding, and, if you've a mind to, you can get all the money you want, and woods and fields and meadows besides. All I ask for, is the place of steward at the summer palace."

"And how am I to do all that?"

"Oh you—" laughed Baum. "Haven't you noticed anything? Haven't you eyes in your head? If the queen dies, the king will marry your countess. She's a free countess, and can marry any king; and if the queen doesn't die, it won't matter much anyhow."

"I'd like to box your ears for saying such a thing; and the next minute you'll be cringing and bowing to them. How can you say such a thing?"

"But if it's true?"

"But it isn't true."

"But if it were true, for all?"

"It can't be true."

"But I tell you it is."

"And even if it were— But, forgive me, good Countess! I don't believe a word of it, it's only he that says it.—If it were true, I'd rather die than ask for the wages of sin. You're a good-for-nothing fellow, and if you ever say such a thing again, I'll tell on you. Take my word for it, I will."

Baum pretended that it was all a joke. But Walpurga could see no joke in the matter, and he was glad when she, at last, promised to say nothing about it. He remarked that he required no mediator and would manage to look out for himself.

In Countess Irma's apartment, which was just below that of the crown prince and Walpurga, a scene of quite a different nature was going on.

Bruno was there, and thus addressed Irma:

"I'm in trouble, and I can't help saying that it's your fault. Mother Sylph has inflicted herself upon me, and is very much in my way."

"Whom do you mean?"

"My mother-in-law has come and has told me with a smile, that as long as my sister—she, too, might just as well be here."

Irma covered her face with both her hands.

"And do you, too, believe it?"

"What matters it what I believe? It's the town-talk, and that's enough."

"It isn't enough; I shall teach them to talk differently."

"Very well. Go into every house, to every man and every woman, and tell them to think differently. But there's one thing you can do. Shall I tell you what it is?"

Irma nodded a silent assent.

"I know that the intendant sued for your hand last summer. He would feel it an honor to be able to call you his wife. Make up your mind to accept him."

A servant entered and announced the intendant.

"What a strange coincidence! Make up your mind at once."

The intendant entered. Bruno greeted him most cordially, and Irma's welcome was a friendly one.

Bruno soon took his leave. The intendant handed Irma a manuscript play and requested her to read it and give him her opinion of it. She accepted it with thanks, and laid it on a table.

"Ah, when spring returns, I shall not care to hear the theater mentioned. Our theater is a winter plant."

"This piece is intended for next winter."

"I can't tell you how I long for summer. When everything is barren and desolate at present, one can hardly realize that there ever were sunshine and green trees and sparkling seas. Do you remember the balmy day last summer, when we met on the lake?"

"I do, indeed; very well."

A long pause ensued. Irma waited for the intendant to speak, but he remained silent. Not a sound was heard but that made by the parrot hopping about in its cage and pecking at the golden wires.

"I long," said Irma, "to visit my friend Emma next summer. I would like to revel in solitude. This winter has been too noisy and exciting."

"Yes, and besides that, the queen's illness."

The parrot tugged at the golden wires, and Irma slightly loosened the red velvet ribbon on her morning dress.

"Do you intend to visit the lake again?" said Irma, trembling.

"No, dear Countess; I shall visit the various theaters of Germany, in order to engage a second basso and, above all, a young person for the lover's parts. You would hardly believe how scarce youthful lovers have become in the German world."

Irma laughed heartily, while the blood mounted to her temples. She felt quite faint.

The servant announced Baroness Steigeneck.

"I'm not at home," was Irma's hurried reply. "Pray remain a moment longer," said she, addressing the intendant.

He remained for some time longer, and referred to the manuscript, mentioning that the passages to be omitted

were marked with a red pencil. Irma promised to read the play, thanked him for the compliment paid her judgment, and conversed in a light and careless tone, until he had left the room. As soon as he had gone, she threw herself on a sofa, where she lay for a long while, weeping bitterly. At last, she looked up, as if bewildered, for she thought she had heard a voice saying: "You meant to—Is there no other course left? Must one who has swerved from the straight path, necessarily sink into the mire of self-abasement?"

Suddenly, she arose, shook her head defiantly and brushed the hair from her face. She ordered her carriage, intending to drive to the sculptor's atelier and resume her work. The servant announced Colonel von Bronnen. "Let him enter," said Irma. A moment later, Irma was apologizing for receiving him in her hat. She was just about to drive out.

"I can call again, dear Countess, and will only leave the messages I have for you."

"Messages?"

"Yes, from your father."

"From my father? Where did you meet him?"

"At Wildenort."

"Were you there?"

"Yes, I had some matters to attend to in the neighborhood, and, without further introduction, called on your father. I felt that I had a right to call myself an intimate friend of yours."

"And how fares it with my father?"

"As it should with the father of such a daughter."

"Of such a daughter—"

"Pardon me, dearest Countess. You are in a hurry, and I am still so impressed by your father's great and noble nature, that I would rather we were both calm—"

"I am quite calm now; pray tell me, have you a message for me?"

"I have not. But it seems to me, dear Countess, as if I were just beginning to understand you.—Oh, what a man your father is!"

Irma looked up in surprise. She thought of Appiani speaking to Odoardo.

The colonel continued, calmly:

"Dear Countess, I am not an enthusiastic youth; but, during the short time I was permitted to spend with your father, I felt as if the exalted existence which had once been my ideal had become a real, living fact. Such perfect communings are impossible unless one feels sure that he is looked upon with favor, and I feel that I have had the good fortune to gain your father's good opinion."

"You fully deserve it. Excuse me, while I lay off my hat. Pray take a seat and tell me more about father." She removed her hat; her excitement had only added to her beauty.

She rang for a servant and ordered him to send the carriage away.

The colonel seated himself.

Irma was all attention. "Now tell me all," said she, brushing back her curls.

"You, of all others, will understand me, when I say that I passed sublime hours with your father. And yet I can recount nothing definite in regard to them. If, while rambling through the woods, I pluck a spray and fasten it to my hat, what can the spray tell of the rustling of the forest, or of the free mountain air? It is merely a symbol, both for us and to those we meet, of the joy that pervades our whole being."

"I understand you," said Irma. They sat opposite each other, and neither of them spoke for some time.

"Did my father mention my brother?"

"No. The word 'son' never passed his lips. Oh, Countess! the man to whom pure love vouchsafes the happiness of becoming a son—"

Emotion seemed to choke his utterance. Irma trembled; her heart beat quickly. Here was a man, noble and highly esteemed, who offered her his heart and hand. Yea, his heart, and she had none to give him in return. She felt a pang that pierced her very soul.

"I feel happy," said she, "that father, in his solitude, has once more seen that this stirring, bustling court contains some worthy men; men like yourself, who stand for that which is best in all things. Do not, I beg of you, reject my honest praise. I know that true

merit is always modest, because it is never satisfied with itself."

"Your father expressed the same thought, in the very same words."

"I believe he must have taught it to me; if not in words, at all events by his example. I would have liked to see you and him together. Your presence must have restored his faith in humanity. You are a messenger of goodness, and since you are good, you believe in the virtue of others."

"Where I have once felt respect and love," replied Bronnen, "I am unchangeable. I should like to write to your father at an early day. I should love, dear Countess, to send him the best of news, and in the best words that language affords. Countess Irma, I long to tell him—"

"My dear friend," interposed Irma, "I am, like my father, of a solitary nature. I thank you. You do not know how greatly your visit and all that you have told me, has benefited me. I thank you with all my heart. Let us remain friends. Give me your hand as a pledge. Let us remain friends, just as we have been. I thank you—"

Her voice was choked with tears.

The colonel took his leave. Irma was alone. She lay kneeling near the sofa. Her heart was filled with unutterable sorrow. The coxcomb had rejected her. Then came a man worthy of the best of wives. He loved and trusted her, and she had refused him. His kind and honest heart had a right to ask for full, unbounded love. She shook off the mingled feeling of distress and mortification. The thought that she had acted honorably, soothed her and seemed like refreshing dew to her whirling brain. But then, again, it galled her when she asked herself: "How far have you sunk, that you are obliged to make a show of simple honesty? And where lives the girl who, if not bound by love, has a right to reject the man whom you have just refused? He cannot but esteem you and your love."

She knew not how long she lay there. She laughed and wept, lamented and rejoiced.

Her maid entered. It was time to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER XII.

THE queen was ill. Her life was saved, but a hope was lost.

It was on a stormy morning in spring, that Baum, carrying a little coffin that contained the corpse of a still-born babe, descended the back stairs of the palace. He walked so softly that he did not hear his own footsteps. He was followed by Madame Leoni, the queen's waiting-woman, who held a white handkerchief to her eyes. At the foot of the stairs, a carriage was in waiting. Baum was obliged to tell the coachman, who was not in court livery, where to drive to. Scarcely any one in the palace knew of what was going on.

They drove out of town and toward the church-yard. An unnamed child is not placed in the vault, but is buried in the public cemetery. The grave-digger was waiting for them. The little corpse was lowered into the open grave, without a name or sign to mark its place of burial.

About the same time that Baum and Madame Leoni were out at the churchyard, Walpurga was thus writing home:

" Thank God! all's over. Now I can look forward to happier days. We've had a terrible time here. If all goes well, there are only seven Sundays more till I come home again. I can hardly believe it possible that I've got to go away from here again, and yet I'll thank God a thousand times, when I'm with you once more. If I stay here, I shall grow quite stupid from thinking so much. There's misery everywhere and people take pleasure in each other's wickedness, and, even if it isn't true, they imagine it is and find pleasure in it, besides.

"There was some talk about our getting a place here, where we could all be comfortable for life; but the queen said that it would be better for me to go home, and whatever she says, is right. She's a true queen, just as a queen ought to be. God has made her so, on purpose.

"I'd only like to know why she has to suffer so much.

"Oh, what a time we've had, Every minute, we

thought the queen— There's not another soul like her in the world, and she had so much to bear, and we're all human after all. But now, thank God, all's over. The king's doctor says the danger's over. But, of course, what we hoped for, is gone. I can't tell you how it made me feel, to think that I was so well, and I felt as if I must go to the queen and give up every drop of my blood to save her.

"Whenever I had a chance, I went down to the church—they have their church in the house here—and prayed for the queen. My countess has never once come to me. They say she looks like a shadow. All the passages here are heated and the whole house is just like one warm room, and the people in the palace would pass each other, without taking notice of any one.

"On the evening that the queen thought she was going to die, she sent for me and the child. She didn't say much, but her eyes told it all.

"And now, Hansei, keep yourself ready; you must come for me. Next time I write, I'll tell you the very day when you're to come.

"I feel as if I couldn't wait; and yet it makes my heart ache to think that I must leave my prince, for he loves me so. But I can't help it. I've got a child, a husband and a mother of my own, at home, and am tired of being in service and among strangers.

"Does the storm rage so terribly with you? Oh, how the wind blows. If it would only bear me home. Last night it blew down a tree in front of my window. It was a fine, large tree, and fell on a figure which it broke to pieces. Every one said it was very beautiful, but I couldn't see any beauty in such a thing. It seemed ever so impudent as it stood there, and was enough to make one blush. I could see the tree and the figure from my window, and people are already there, putting things to rights, and carrying all that's damaged out of the way.

"They're very quick about such things here, whether it be a tree, a marble figure, or a dead child.

"Forgive me for writing such a mixed-up letter. When I get home again, I can never tell you all that I've gone through here, if I live to be a hundred years old.

"And when you come, dear Hansei, just put on the clothes that the king sent, and one of the fine shirts that I made for you when we were married. They're in the blue closet on the upper shelf on the left-hand side with the red ribbon. Forgive me for writing all this to you, but you've had to take care of yourself almost a year, and I haven't been able to help you, or get your things for you. Now that will all come right again. I feel as if I were at home already, pulling your shirt-collar straight, as we go to church on a Sunday morning. I feel as if it was some one else who had gone through all this, and as if the days were a high mountain that one can never cross. But all will be right again, and we'll be merry and happy together, for, thank God, we've sound limbs, and true hearts. Forgive me, all of you, if I've ever said a single word to offend you.

"If I had you here, dear Hansei, I'd put my arms round your neck and kiss you to my heart's content. You and the child and mother are all the world to me. I'm just beginning to feel how much I love you all, and I can't understand how I could stay away from you so long, without dying of grief and homesickness.

"Don't forget to bring a large chest with you, for they've given me ever so many things.

"And bring me something out of our garden; one of my pinks, and also one of the child's shoes. But I'll tell you more plainly about this, in my next letter.

"I can't fall into the ways of the court folk. I'm told that they can't touch or dress their own dead. They have it all done by strangers, who are paid for it.

"I've been spinning flax this winter, for shirts for my prince. They were all pleased with it, and came to my room to look on and seemed as much astonished as if it were something wonderful.

"I like to think of working in the fields again, it makes one much healthier. But don't worry, for nothing ails me except that I am terribly homesick.

"And now farewell; a thousand times farewell!

"Your WALPURGA ANDERMATTEN."

While Walpurga, with slow and heavy hand, toiled at

her letter, Countess Irma sat at her desk, in the room below, and dashed off the following lines:

“My dearest Emma: What a night I’ve passed—I must be endowed with herculean strength, or I should not have lived through it. I have looked into the fiery eyes of the glaring monsters who dwell above and below our daily life and who suddenly, and without warning, burst upon us. You must suffer me to return to you,—to write to you once more. I don’t know how long it is since I’ve done so. You are my fortress, my rock, my shelter. You are firm, immovable, steadfast, patient. When in distress, I come to you. I flee to you.

“It was a terrible night. The tree still stands, but a young blossom was broken off. I came from the queen’s apartment; I could not pray, but stood by the window, and thought while I looked out into the night: Thou who renewest everything, who awakenest the earth from its wintry sleep, breathing new life into trees and flowers and all that faded and withered last year—suffer a human heart to renew itself; let past deeds be destroyed and forgotten. Suffer a child of man, regenerate and redeemed, to begin life anew. I stood at the casement, while the wind howled without. Suddenly there was a fearful crash. A tall oak before my window had been broken by the angry wind. The tree toppled and, in its fall, dashed a statue of Venus, which stood beneath it, into fragments. It all seemed like a feverish dream, and when I realized what had happened, my only wish was: Oh that I had been in the statue’s place! Oh that I had been dashed to atoms—It would have been far better for me.

“I hardly know what to tell you. I only know that I may again be with you—perhaps to-day, to-morrow, at night or in the daytime, I shall fall on my knees to you and you will lift me up. I shall rest on your heart, and you will protect me. You will save me from the demons; you will not question me; you will give food and drink and rest to the stranger soul, and will not ask whence it comes.

“What are we? What is the world? We see and know all, and yet—

"How ingenious the devices with which the world lulls its conscience into slumber—If there were only no awakening! The awakening—the morrow—that is the most terrible thought of all.

"An eternal kiss rests upon a statue at the arsenal, and the stars, the moon and the sun look down upon it. If I could but climb up there, hurl myself to the earth and destroy myself—the world—everything!

"Should you hear the bells tolling loudly, know that it is my funeral. If there be a gentle knock at your door, think that it is a poor soul that was once so rich—might still be—aye, is. Who can restore a human being to himself? Who draws him out of the lake—out of the lake—

"Why is it that the lake is constantly before my eyes? I see myself in it—I sink! Help me! Save me, Emma! Help me, I sink—!"

Irma suddenly uttered a loud shriek. The maid hurried into the room. Her mistress had fainted and lay on the floor. When she revived, she asked what had happened to her. Doctor Gunther sat at her bedside and said:

"You've been writing; here is the letter. I took charge of it, as I supposed it was this that had so excited you. I read the first six lines. I was obliged to, but I assure you, on my honor, that I did not read a word more. I took charge of the letter, so that no other eye should see it. And now, keep yourself quiet; here it is."

Irma sat up and read the letter. Then she looked at the Doctor earnestly, and said:

"I believe you." She called for a light and consigned the letter to the flames.

"Will you promise me one thing?"

"What is it?"

"That you will give me poison, if I lose my mind."

"You are playing with extremes," replied the physician, "and that can't be done with impunity."

After a long pause, Gunther said:

"Above all things, you must control yourself, and must not imagine that these wild, wandering thoughts are your true self. I thought that you would take my advice, but

I was mistaken. You are your best, your only, physician ; force yourself to rest and let calm and happy thoughts alone engage you."

Irma rested her head on her hand. Her eyes glowed with feverish fire. She closed them, but suddenly arose and, seizing her loosened hair with both hands, exclaimed :

"I will have my hair cut off."

"That is another of your wild thoughts," said Gunther, calming her and taking her hand in his. "You always wish to accomplish your desires by violent methods. You must acquire repose."

"Yes, life is a slow and gradual growth, and death, yes, death in life, takes but a moment," said Irma, with a wild and vacant stare.

"And now go to sleep, and you will soon be well again," said Gunther. He was about to leave, but Irma detained him, and inquired.

"How is your wife—your family?"

"Thank you," said he. "They are calm and resigned."

Irma was about to beg that Gunther's wife might visit her, but could not force herself to do so. Gunther left. He, himself, thought that if Irma would frankly open her mind to his wife, the good sense of the latter would gradually help the distracted one. But he knew that his wife would not visit Irma. With all her kindness of heart, she had no mercy for arrogance, and Irma, in her prosperous days, had neglected to revisit the house in which she had received so hearty a welcome. Ever since Irma had again left her father and returned to court, its doors were closed to her. Irma, moreover, was regarded as having promoted the revival of the convents and the appointment of the reactionary ecclesiastical ministry of which Schnabelsdorf was premier.

CHAPTER XIII.

WALPURGA'S thoughts were of home, and she tried to picture to herself how it would be when her letter arrived there. But she had been away so long that she found it difficult to do so. The letter had

arrived at dusk, and Hansei, who was out in the back-yard, chopping wood, was called in. He hurriedly lit the lamp, and Stasi read the letter to them. The grandmother wept, and the child on her lap moved about restlessly, as if it felt that the words it heard were its mother's. Nor could they help noticing that it had twice pulled the letter out of Stasi's hand, and that, in order to finish reading it, she had been obliged to move her seat. The child had, nevertheless, remained restless as before. At last, the grandmother dried her tears and said: "Thank God, that I have such a child. I don't mean you," said she to her granddaughter, "I mean your mother. You may be glad if you turn out as good as she is." Hansei listened with mouth agape, and smiled all over his face when they came to the passage about Walpurga's embracing him.

When she had finished the letter, Stasi said:

"It's a sad letter for all; but she'll be so much the happier when she gets home again. I'm only sorry that I shan't meet her when she does come."

Stasi was to be married on the following Sunday, to a forest-keeper, who lived near the frontier, on the other side of the mountain.

Hansei took the letter again and was about to go away.

"Leave the letter here," whispered the mother to him. "That's not the sort of a letter to read aloud at the Chamois. There are things in it which only man and wife ought to tell each other when they're alone."

"Yes, you're right," said Hansei. "Here's the letter." He was, nevertheless, sorry that the folks would not be able to see what a pretty letter his wife could write, and how much she loved him, and how good she was, and that none in the whole village deserved to be spoken to by her, for his Walpurga was the pride of his life.

"Yes, grandmother," said he, while he stood in the doorway, "thank God, the longest time's over. I can hardly understand how we managed to live without each other so long, or how it'll be when she sits in this low room again. But that'll be all right, and there are other houses besides this."

Hansei spoke these last words quite rapidly. He wanted his mother-in-law to understand that he was about to purchase a house. It was proper that she should know of it, but there was no need of her interference, lest she should rule him. The innkeeper was quite in the right.

Hansei could hardly wait until he was again with his privy counselor, and this privy counselor was, of course, the innkeeper. He looked up at the house and the trees, as if to say: "Just keep still, and don't be afraid. She'll come back again in good time, and she still thinks of you all. She knows many a thing, and would make a better queen than many another woman, and could reign better than the strongest man—" When Hansei arrived in front of the inn, he waited for a little while, in order to get his breath, and compose himself. It is no light matter to have such an extraordinary wife; one is very apt to be thrown into the background and to be less thought of. He was proud of his wife, but he was the husband, nevertheless. He went into the inn quietly, and sat down to a schoppen of wine, as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That's the way a man should be," thought he to himself, while he took a comfortable draught. "It won't do to tell the world everything. Keep things to yourself. That makes the master; and that's what the women can't do."

Hansei patted Dachsel and Wachsel, the landlord's two dogs, who seemed to be fond of him, for they knew their master's favorites.

"Is it long since you've heard from your queen?" asked the host, casually.

"No. Only to-day."

"What does she say?"

"All sorts of things," said Hansei, discreetly, adding, in a careless manner, "I want to ask your advice about something presently."

The other guests looked up in surprise, to find Hansei the woodcutter addressing the innkeeper in this familiar one, and were none the less astonished that the latter did not object.

"If you've got more paper money it would be quite convenient," replied the innkeeper.

"I've none this time, but I want to talk to you about another matter."

The host went into the back room, sent his wife out to wait on the guests, and exclaimed: "Come in, Hansei." A secret council was held in the back room.

Hansei told him that his wife would return in seven weeks from yesterday, that she had written to him to come for her, and that, while he knew how to carry himself in the world—

"Yes, that you do," said the host, "it was only yesterday that the chief forester—he was sitting in the very seat you're in, now—said: 'That Hansei's a sharp fellow'."

Hansei smiled his thanks for the compliment.

"But I want to ask you about something."

"What is it?"

"Look here. You're so much—how shall I say it?—so much readier with your mouth, and more mannerly than I am, and if I have to go to the capital and stand up before the king and queen and all the grand gentlemen, why—why—why, look here, whenever I think of it, even now, it chokes me, and my opinion is that you'd better go along as my mouthpiece and say everything properly. One doesn't have such a chance more than once in a lifetime, and it won't do to forget anything."

"That's a clever thought of yours," said the innkeeper.

"You shan't do it for nothing and the journey shan't cost you a groschen."

"No, I can't go with you. At court, it won't do to say: 'This is my child's godfather, my comrade, and he's to come in, too, and speak for me.' The one who has the audience is the only one who's allowed to speak. If you want to have a little fun, and your wife's agreed, I might go as Walpurga's husband—that would do."

"No," cried Hansei, "I won't do any such thing, and my wife wouldn't, either. That won't do at all."

"Well, my dear fellow, all that remains is to go and speak for yourself."

Hansei was sad. He felt as if thrust out of doors. He had not been brought up and schooled for such things as talking to the king and queen and their courtiers, and was afraid of what he might do to them if they were to

laugh at and ridicule him, for he wouldn't stand that. He would allow no one to make sport of him, in his wife's presence, for he was the husband and she only the wife.

"Don't be so faint-hearted—a man like you—" said the innkeeper consolingly, while Hansei rubbed his forehead as if to make another head out of his own. "Just pretend I was the king. What would you say?"

"You speak first."

"All right." The innkeeper placed himself in position, put his hand in the breast of his coat, balanced himself on one foot, threw his head back, and said gravely:

"Ah, and so you're the husband of—ah, what's her name—of Walpurga?"

"Yes, she's my wife."

"Have you been a soldier?"

"No, by your leave."

"You needn't say 'by your leave,' but you must add 'Your Majesty,' and always as short as possible. The high folk never have any time to spare; they're always in a hurry and everything is counted out to the very minute. But what's the use of worrying ourselves already? We'd better settle our little business now. You buy my house and fields. I'll let you have them cheap, and then when the king asks how it goes with you, you can answer: 'Your Majesty, it would go very well with me; but I still owe three thousand florins on my house and farm and they trouble me greatly.' And when you say that, you'll see that the king will give you the three thousand florins at once. But if you didn't owe it, you couldn't say it. I know you. You're an honest fellow and can't tell a lie, and you know you might just as well say four thousand, or five thousand—it's all the same—and you'll have some money over to build with. But there's no need of that, and so you can lay in a stock of wine instead."

"Yes, yes, you're right, but I think we'll make it a sham sale, for I oughtn't do it without my wife's consent. The money really comes from her, and I don't even know whether she's willing to have the inn. We'll just make it a sham sale, and, if the king gives me the money and my wife's agreed, it'll be all right."

The host had, before that, flattered Hansei on account

of his cleverness, but now, when there was real occasion for his doing so, held his peace. After a pause, he said: "While the clever fellow makes up his mind, the fool has time to make up his. I'll think about it."

They returned to the inn-parlor. Hansei felt ill at ease and soon went home. On the way, old Zenza greeted him. He made believe that he neither saw nor heard her, and hurried on. How glad he was that he had not become wicked, and how would he have felt now, if he had allowed himself to be tempted. Nothing would have been left him but to drown himself in the lake before Walpurga's return.

When he reached home, he said to himself: "I can still enter here with a good conscience and, God be praised, I can bid her welcome with a good conscience." After he got into bed, he kept on repeating the words: "God be praised," to himself, until he at last fell asleep. When he awoke, the first thing he said was: "Good-morning, Walpurga." He addressed his words to the empty air, but he felt as if she must hear him, as if she were at home already, for she had sent so good a messenger in advance. The letter was like a postillion playing welcome melodies. Hansei lay there dreaming, with his eyes wide open, until late in the day. But the day was both a good and an evil one. He had promised his comrades to go out hunting with them. All at once, it occurred to him that it was time to give up such sport. He would gladly have remained at home, but feared the talk of the innkeeper and, though the hills were far away, he felt as if he could distinctly hear the innkeeper telling his comrades: "Ha! Ha! His wife's coming home, and she's the master, and Hansei will have to lie down as she bids him." He fancied that he heard his laughing comrades walking about in the woods and calling out: "Lie down, Hansei; lie down," as if he were a dog.

An advocate at the provincial court,—for Hansei now had such distinguished companions—was also with the hunting party, and would laugh and jeer more than any of them. And then, to add to the fun, the innkeeper would tell a fine story about the letter. Thank God, he hadn't had a chance to read it. That would have been

too bad. If I only hadn't mentioned it; but I'm too stupid and can't keep a thing to myself. If the innkeeper knew nothing of the letter, I could turn back without feeling ashamed and without minding their jeers. But my mind's made up. I shan't go with them again. I used to get along by myself, and I will again, when she comes back. We'll need no one, then. Hansei was busy thinking, that morning. He looked back upon how he had been living all this time. He felt so homesick about his wife at first, that he could not remain in the house and was unable to eat, drink sleep, or work. So he went to the inn, where they wished him joy because his wife had brought him such good luck, and this had pleased him; and when others stopped talking about it, he would renew the subject; and the innkeeper would take him along to fairs, target-shootings and pleasure-parties. One could not help but admit it was all very pleasant and entertaining, and the folks would say: "There goes Hansei, whose wife is the crown prince's nurse." Wherever he went they showed him great respect, and it's very pleasant to be received with respect wherever you go. Before allowing him to sit down, the hostess would always wipe off the chair with her apron, and considered it a pleasure to do so. At last, a happy thought occurred to him, and he still held fast to it. He would be the very man to keep an inn, and his wife would be the best hostess from one end of the land to the other. She would know how to talk to the people; and, after all, what is there pleasanter in the world than keeping an inn?

Hansei was so long in getting up that the grandmother came to the door and asked: "Is anything the matter? Are you sick?"

"Oh no, God forbid. I'm coming directly," replied Hansei. He soon came and, in a kindly tone, said: "Good-morning. Is the child hearty?"

"Yes. All's well, thank God," said the grandmother. She was always the same, whether Hansei was rude and taciturn, or talkative and confidential.

During her daughter's absence, she had never interfered with him but once, and then she had said: "You're the husband and the father, and should know what to do,

and what to let alone." She knew very well that if she attempted to induce Hansei to give up his free life and his comrades, he would be less likely to do so, if it were only to avoid the appearance of being ruled by the old woman.

"Will you be at home at noon, or are you going across the field?"

"I'll stay at home," said he, "I want to split wood. We'll clear up things and make it look tidy about the house, by the time she returns."

The grandmother nodded a pleasant assent. Hansei would gladly have said more, but he always thought that another ought to speak first, and so he sat there, stuffing potato after potato into his mouth, just as if every one were an answer he had received. With every potato that he pared, he thought of the clever things he would say to the king. He felt that the latter could not escape him. Six thousand florins could be counted on; and of five thousand he felt quite sure.

"If the king gives us a good farm on a royal estate, or any other appointment, we'll move away from here," said Hansei aloud. He thought that the grandmother must know that he would gladly break loose from his comrades and begin a changed life, elsewhere.

"Yes, yes," was all that the grandmother said.

"I think we must soon write an answer, and I'll write to her, too. She seems so sad."

"Yes, yes; do so. I must go to the child."

In promising to write to his wife, Hansei had imposed a difficult task upon himself. He would have liked to write kind, consoling, hearty words; to have cautioned her not to worry so much about the few weeks that still remained, and thus, perhaps, lost sight of what advantages might present themselves. Now was the time to be in good spirits, for pay-day was fast approaching. He had all these thoughts in his head, and she would respect him for the manly advice he was about to offer. But to get these ideas out of his head and on paper, was a difficult task.

Consoling himself with the words: "There's no need of my writing. I'll see her soon, and can tell her everything far better," he gave up the attempt.

While the grandmother went into the room in which the child lay, Hansei remained sitting at the table and emptied the whole dish of potatoes, while he was, in imagination, explaining to the king how well he understood forest matters. When the last potato was eaten, he went out, took axe, mallet and wedge and, with mighty strokes, split the stumps which had been piled up along the road in front of the garden. He had just taken off his coat, for, in spite of the keen spring breeze, he didn't feel cold, when a voice said, "Ah, you're still here." The innkeeper stood behind him with his rifle slung over his shoulder and accompanied by his two dogs, Dachsel and Wachsel. "You must have overslept yourself, just as I did. If we take the road through the valley and the ravine, we can still catch up with our comrades. Come, hurry and dress yourself, and get your gun."

As if this were a command which he must obey, Hansei carried axe, mallet and wedge into the house, dressed himself, took his gun and said to the grandmother: "I think I'll go along, after all." He would have liked to say; "I shall only go this once, so that they don't think that I stay at home on account of my wife's letter," but he held his peace. It isn't necessary to tell everything, and those to whom you do tell all, have a right to interfere in all. I want to arrange everything myself, and she must respect me for doing it.

Hansei accompanied the innkeeper to the hunt. He was in a good humor and more cheerful than ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

"How was it once? How will it be?"
I prithee, darling, ask not me.
Our life's the Present—hold it fast,
And let each hour in joy be passed.

Lift up thine eyes, so bright and clear;
To search my heart, thou need'st not fear.
Come, let us gather Flora's sweets,
Ere wintry storm around us beats.

THUS sang Irma, with clear, ringing voice. Nature was again decked in beauteous array. The sharp winds of early spring were still blowing, and the sunlight was often suddenly obscured by floating snow-clouds. But the grass had begun to grow in the meadows, and here and there spring flowers were blooming.

Irma had recovered, after a few days. The bulletins respecting the queen's health had ceased, and Gunther, who had lived in the palace for weeks, now returned to his own house.

The queen, who was now permitted to leave her apartment, spent much of her time in the winter-garden, where the last fête had been celebrated. The trees and flowers were again in their wonted places; the fountains plashed, the fish swam about in the marble basin, and the birds twittered in their great cages. Walpurga and the prince were allowed to remain with the queen for hours at a time. All vied with each other in offering her delicate attentions which were inspired by something more than a mere sense of what was due her rank. Irma had shown so much devotion to the queen that the latter felt like begging her pardon. She often had the words upon her lips, but could not utter them. Friendship suffers from mere suspicion, and the queen well knew that she was looked upon as weak-minded and vacillating. She determined that she would be thus no longer. She felt that the great mark of a strong character is to prevent the world from knowing every change and phase of thought and feeling, and to give it naught but results.

No one should ever know what had so troubled her heart. She would be strong.

She kept Irma about her much of the time, and the hours they spent in the green, flowering, winter-garden, reading, working, conversing or singing, were serene and blissful.

Irma, who was an excellent reader, read Goethe's Tasso to them. It accorded with their present mood, and one day, Irma said:

"Your Majesty resembles Princess Leonora in many things. You have the advantage, however, of being able to accomplish in a few weeks what, in her case, it required years to bring about."

"I don't understand you."

"What I mean is, that long confinement to the sick-room and careful nursing are apt to produce, in the invalid, a certain sensitiveness and an almost imperceptible change in manner. It is well to escape from this hot-house mood into the open air; to be once again among the trees which are proof against all weathers, and to inhale the fresh, life-giving breeze."

The king was often present during these readings, and frequently felt moved to express his thoughts on the weightiest and most beautiful passages in Tasso. Irma often trembled. Every word she uttered seemed wicked. She felt that she no longer had a right to speak of pure and holy subjects, but the king was so cheerful and unconstrained that she speedily dismissed all concern.

"You are spoiling me, and will make me quite vain," said the queen, one day. "I have another wish. I long to go from flowers to works of art. I often feel like visiting the picture-gallery and the collection of antiques. When we move among the achievements of art the deepest impression we receive is, that human beings who lived long ago, have bequeathed their best possessions to us, and that eyes long since closed in death, look down upon us with their undying glances, and are still with us."

At the words "undying glances," the king and Irma looked at each other with involuntary surprise. To them, the words were suggestive. Irma composed herself and replied:

"I cannot help joining in Your Majesty's wish: from flowers and trees to works of art! Surrounded by pictures and statues, the soul dwells in an ideal atmosphere; life everlasting environs us; we inhale the very breath of genius which, although its possessors may have vanished from earth, endures for ever. When I was forced to the conclusion that I was without real artistic talent, I envied the monarchs to whom is vouchsafed the happiness of encouraging talent and genius in others. That is a great compensation."

"How beautifully she interprets everything," said the queen, addressing her husband; and it was with a mingled expression of delight and pain that the king regarded the two ladies. What was passing in his mind? He admired and loved Irma; he respected and loved his wife. He was untrue to both. Irma and the queen went through the galleries and the collection of antiques, and would sit for hours, looking at the pictures and statues. Every remark of the queen's was met by an observation of Irma's, which was in full accord with hers.

"When I look at and listen to you two," said the king, "and think of where you resemble each other and where you differ, it seems as if I saw the daughters of Schiller and Goethe before me."

"How singular!" interposed the queen, and the king continued:

"Goethe saw the world through brown, and Schiller through blue eyes; and so it is with you two. You look through blue eyes, like Schiller's, and our friend through brown eyes, like those of Goethe's."

"It won't do to let any one know that we flatter each other so," said the queen, smiling. Irma looked up to the ceiling, where painted angels were hovering in the air. There is a world of infinite space where no one can supplant another; it is only in the everyday world that exclusiveness exists, thought she to herself.

The more the queen gained in strength, the more marked was the change from a subdued, to a bright and cheerful vein.

It seemed as if Irma's wish was about to be realized. The life-renewing power of spring which reanimates the

trees and the plants, seemed to extend its influence over human life. It seemed as if the past were buried and forgotten.

It was on the first mild day of spring, and they were walking together in the palace garden, when the queen said:

"I can't imagine that there ever was a time when we did not know each other, dear Irma." She stopped and looked into Irma's eyes with an expression radiant with joy. "You once told me about a Greek philosopher," said she, addressing Doctor Gunther, who was walking after them with the captain of the palace-guard, "who thought that our souls had a previous existence, and that our best experience, in this world, is merely the recollection of what we have experienced or imagined to ourselves in some earlier state of being."

"Without accepting this fanciful theory," replied Gunther, "there is much in life which may be regarded as destiny. I believe that all living truths which we take up into ourselves, and which thus, as it were, become a part of our being, were intended for us. Our mind, the whole constitution of our being, is destined for and attuned to it. There is thus perfect correspondence between our destiny and our capacity. But I beg Your Majesty to regard yourself as destined, at present, to step into your carriage. We must not let the first walk be too long."

The queen and Irma seated themselves in the carriage which awaited them at the Nymph's Grove. They drove on slowly, and the queen said:

"You cannot imagine, dear Irma, how timid and fearful I was when I first came here." She told her how she had looked into the eyes of the multitude that surrounded her, and had asked herself: "Who of all these does, in truth, belong to you?" and how encouraged she had felt when Irma spoke to her, as it were, with her warm, brown eyes.

"And they were speaking to you," replied Irma. "I should have liked to say to you: 'Sweet being! imagine that we have known each other for years, and feel just as if we had been friends forever.' I fancy that we both felt thus because we were both timid and fearful. It was the first time I had ever been at court, and I felt as if I

couldn't help taking the lord steward's staff out of his hand, and supporting myself on it."

"How strange! I had the very same thought," said the queen, "and, now that I think of it, I can still recollect that the lord steward looked at me incessantly."

The affection of the two ladies was cemented by a hundred little memories. The carriage drove on slowly, but their thoughts took in days and months. There was a turn in the road; they had just reached the place where the statue had been shattered.

"It was a terrible night," said the queen, "when that happened, and it seems to me that simple-minded Walpurga is right when she says that it is wrong for us thus to expose the undraped human figure."

"I must be permitted to differ with Your Majesty," replied Irma. "The free—why should we mince words?—the nude, beautiful human form is the only one in accord with free nature. All frippery is subject to changes of taste and fashion. The human form as shaped by the hand of nature, is alone fitted to stand in her temple."

"You are a free soul; far freer than I am," said the queen. They alighted. Irma accompanied the queen to her apartments and then returned to her own. When she found herself alone she threw up her hands, exclaiming:

"What is the greatest punishment? It is not hell, where other guilty ones suffer with us! No; to be conscious of guilt and yet condemned to remain beside a pure and happy creature; that is far worse than all the torments of hell!"

"God keep you, Irma! God keep you!" shrieked the parrot. Irma started with a shudder.

CHAPTER XV.

SPRING returned, ushered in by the merry singing of larks and finches, and bringing with it the latest Paris fashions. The queen now appeared in public, and the ladies of the capital were delighted to pattern their costumes after hers.

The queen drove out, with Irma beside her, and Walpurga and the prince opposite.

"You must not worry when you're at home again," said the queen to Walpurga.

Addressing the queen in French, Irma said, with a smile: "Countess Brinkenstein would disapprove of your manifesting any interest in the future fortunes of one whose term of service is at an end."

With a degree of boldness that surprised her two well-wishers, Walpurga said: "There'll be one advantage at any rate, for, at home, they won't treat me as if I were deaf and dumb."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, they wouldn't, while I was about, say things that I can't understand."

Irma endeavored to pacify her, but without avail. Walpurga's longing for home had made her exacting and dissatisfied. She felt ill at ease everywhere, and felt sure that the very people who had done so much to humor and spoil her would soon get along without her.

There was another and a deeper cause for her feeling annoyed when Irma spoke French. A youthful-looking nurse from one of the French cantons of Switzerland had become a member of the prince's household. She could not understand a word of German, and that had been the principal reason for engaging her. The prince was to speak French before he acquired any other language.

Walpurga and the new-comer were, as regarded each other, like two mutes. Nor was she otherwise favorably disposed toward the tall, handsome girl with the French cap. She was, indeed, quite jealous of her. What had the foreigner to do with the child? She was, at times, angry at the child itself.

"You'll soon *parlez vous* so that I shan't be able to understand a word," she would say, when alone with him, and would feel quite angry; and, the very next minute, she would exclaim: "God forgive me! How well it is that I'll soon be home again. I can count the days on my fingers."

Mademoiselle Kramer now told Walpurga that a chamber* had been prepared for the crown prince.

* Kammer—meaning here the chamberlain and other officers composing the household.

"He has rooms enough already," said Walpurga.

Mademoiselle Kramer was again obliged to undertake the difficult task of explaining the court custom, in such matters, to Walpurga, who made her go over the various names again and again. She would always begin thus:

"The crown prince will have an ayah—"

"Ayah? what sort of a word's that? what does that mean?"

"It means the prince's waiting-maid. And when his royal highness becomes four years old, he will have a new set of officers; and so on, as he grows older, only the new set will always be of higher rank than those who precede them."

"Yes, I can easily understand it," thought Walpurga; "new people and new palaces, constant change; how lucky that your eyes and your limbs are fast to you; if it wasn't for that, they'd be getting you new ones every year or two."

Walpurga felt reassured when she learned that Frau von Gerloff, a lady of noble birth and, hitherto, first waiting-woman to the queen, had been appointed as ayah to the prince. Walpurga had known her for a long while and said to her:

"If any one had asked me who should take charge of the prince, you'd have been my first choice. This is only another proof of the queen's wisdom and her kind heart. She gives up her dearest friend for the sake of her son."

Walpurga deemed it necessary to give Frau von Gerloff various directions as to the management of the prince. The good lady listened to her patiently. When Walpurga next saw the queen, she felt it necessary to express her satisfaction with the arrangements which had been made.

"You'd have done very well," said she to Madame Leoni, the queen's second waiting-maid; "but our good queen can't afford to part with both hands at once."

Madame Leoni smiled her thanks, although she really felt mortified and thought that she had been slighted because of her being a commoner. But the first law of court life is: "Take offense at nothing."

The slumbering infant-prince had no idea of the jealous feelings which already played about his cradle.

By degrees, Walpurga got her effects ready, and, when packing up certain articles, she would say: "No one would dream that heart's blood is clinging to you."

Doctor Gunther had given orders that Walpurga should often leave the prince for a while, in order that he might gradually grow accustomed to her absence.

Mademoiselle Kramer, who, during the first few days accompanied her on her walks, found the occupation a difficult one, for Walpurga wanted to stop at every shop window, and whenever she saw men or women whose costume resembled that worn at her home, wanted to go up to them and inquire whence they had come, and whether they knew her husband, her child and her mother. Mademoiselle Kramer soon wearied of the office of guide, and would sometimes allow Walpurga to go out alone, on which occasions she would entrust her with her watch, so that she might return at the proper time. Walpurga's great delight was to watch the soldiers parading at guard-mounting, and her route generally led her beyond the city gates. She would walk along the highway that led to her home. This comforted her, and she would often think of how she had felt when coming to the palace by that very road. It seemed to her as if ages had passed since then, and it was not without an effort, at times, that she induced herself to retrace her steps. She would often stand there listening, and imagining that she could hear her child's voice borne on the breeze. Which child? Her heart was divided and she hurried back to the prince. It was well he rested so quietly in the arms of the French-woman. Walpurga, however, was vexed at this circumstance, and laughed triumphantly when he wanted to be taken by her as soon as he noticed her.

"Yes, you're a true soul," said she. "When men are good, they're a great deal better than women. Your other father, my Hansei, is very good, too, and he's coming, day after to-morrow, and you'll shake hands with him when he comes,—so."

Walpurga observed that the ayah was almost beside herself at this mode of treating the child, and that it cost

Mademoiselle Kramer an effort to prevent her from putting a veto upon it; but this only made Walpurga the more wanton in her mad pranks with the prince.

"Now don't forget," said she, "that I gave you myself to feast upon. The others only give you what comes from the kitchen. We two are one, and day after tomorrow my Hansei will come, and then I'll go home, and when you're a big boy you must come and see me; and if it's in cherry time, I'll give you the best cherries. And my Hansei will go hunting with you and will carry your gun for you, and you'll shoot a great big stag and a roe, and a chamois, and we'll roast them. I'll stick a nosegay on your hat, and then we'll row over the lake together, and I'll give you a kiss, and then I'll bid you good-by."

The child laughed heartily, while Walpurga looked into his eyes and spoke to him thus. Then it laid its little head on her cheek, and Walpurga cried out:

"Mademoiselle Kramer! Mademoiselle Kramer! he knows how to kiss already: he's kissing me now. Yes, you're the right sort of a man and a king's son to boot; they always begin betimes."

It seemed as if she wanted to make known all the love she had for the child during the few days that yet remained to her at the palace, and she did this both from affection and spite, for she desired to show the Frenchwoman how very much she and the child loved one another. He would never grow to love the foreigner as much as he loved Walpurga, and then she would sing:

"Standing by yon willow tree,
Scarcely weeping, thou dost see
My bark put off from shore.

As long as willows grow,
As long as waters flow,
Thou'lt see me nevermore."

While she sang, the boy crowed and laughed, and Walpurga protested to Mademoiselle Kramer, that she would wager her head he understood everything already.

"And besides," said she, with an angry glance at the Frenchwoman, "the language that little children speak is

the same all the world over. Isn't it so? 'The French don't come into the world speaking gibberish.' Then she would sing and dance about, and kiss the child again. It seemed as if she must repress all her sadness, and, in one outburst, give vent to all her joy.

"You excite the child too much; you will do it harm," said Mademoiselle Kramer, endeavoring to quiet her.

"That won't harm him; he's got the right stuff in him. No Frenchwoman can spoil him."

Walpurga was in a restless and contradictory mood. She had long known that the tie would be broken, and had often wished and hoped for that end. But now when the moment of separation approached, all painful memories vanished. She felt that she could never again live alone. She would always miss something, even the trouble and excitement; and, besides, everything had always come all right again. She felt hurt, moreover, that the others seemed so indifferent about her leaving them. And the child—why hadn't it sense enough to speak and say: "Father and mother, you mustn't do this; you mustn't take my Walpurga away?"

But now others controlled the child. What would they do with him? Why should she no longer be allowed to interfere, and to say things should be thus and so? She had nursed him from the first day of his life, and they had been together day and night. And how would the days and nights be when they were no longer together?

When Walpurga had finished her supper, she held up the empty dish to the child and, with a bitter tone, said:

"Do you see this? I'm of no more use now than this empty platter."

Nor did she care to sleep. She felt that she could not lose a minute of the time that was yet left her with the child. Although she did at times drop asleep, she would wake up in a fright; for, in her dream, she had heard children crying—one far off by the lane, and another beside her—and had thought she was standing between them, and that she must divide herself: must be there and here. And then, too, she had heard the cow bellowing and pulling at the rope, just as it had when fastened to the garden hedge. Walpurga saw it all, quite dis-

tinctly; and the cow had such large eyes, and she could feel its warm breath against her face. Then she would wake up and rub her eyes and all would be quiet again, and she would know that it was a dream.

It was the day before her departure. Walpurga bitterly regretted that she had not told Hansei to come sooner. He might have remained there a day, and she would then have had some one to stretch out his hand in welcome, while now she could only offer hers in farewell.

She walked the streets and looked up into the blue sky—the same blue sky that rested over her home. She went through the little street in which Doctor Gunther lived. She read the name on the door-plate and walked in. A servant conducted her into the doctor's ante-room, where many patients were waiting to see him. Walpurga gave her name to the servant. All looked at her in astonishment. She was asked to come in without waiting for her turn, and said that she had only come to say good-bye. Gunther told her to go into the garden and wait there for him until his office hours were over. She did so. Madame Gunther was sitting on the steps that led into the garden. She called the peasant woman to her, and when she learned who she was, told her she might wait there. Walpurga sat down. Madame Gunther went on with her work and did not speak a word. She had a decided prejudice against the nurse. Her husband had often told her of Walpurga's peculiarities, and Madame Gunther had concluded that they were full of coquetry, and that she was trying to make a show of her simplicity. Walpurga's appearance only confirmed her in this opinion.

"You are going home again, aren't you?" asked Madame Gunther, at last; for she did not wish to be uncivil.

Walpurga told her how happy she would be at home again.

Madame Gunther looked up. She was one of those persons who are rendered truly happy when freed from a prejudice. Entering into conversation with Walpurga, she soon found that the nurse had been led to exaggerate certain traits of her strong nature, but that it was just this strength of character that had prevented her from los-

ing herself in the new scenes through which she had passed.

Madame Gunther now urged her to keep a stout heart and to avoid making herself unhappy by comparing her home with what she had left behind her in the palace.

"How is that you know all about it?" asked Walpurga; "have you ever been among strangers?"

"I can put myself in your place," said Madame Gunther with a smile. She was rapidly winning her way to Walpurga's heart.

She asked her into the room; and, when Gunther came down, he found Walpurga on the steps, with his fatherless little grandchild on her lap.

"And now you know my wife, too.," said Gunther.

"Yes; but too late."

Gunther also advised Walpurga to keep up her spirits after she got home, and, as he, too, was a native of the Highlands, he gave her a merry description of what her welcome would be.

Gunther said he would see her once more, at the palace, and his wife shook hands with her, saying:

"May you be happy at home."

"I mean to send your mother a present," said the doctor. "Tell her to try and think of the young student who danced with her at the Kirchweih* many years ago, when she was betrothed to your father. I'll send you six bottles of wine to-day. Tell her to drink them in remembrance of me, but not to take too much at a time."

"I thank you for my mother, and I feel already as if I had been drinking the best of wine," said Walpurga. "My Countess Irma was right, for she always said Madame Gunther would be a lady after my own heart, and now all that I can wish you is, that, to the end of your days, you may be as happy as you've made me."

No notice was taken of her allusion to Irma. Encouraged and strengthened, Walpurga returned to the palace.

* Church festival.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE queen came to Walpurga that evening and said: "I shall not say farewell to you. Don't let us speak of parting. I only wish to thank you with all my heart, for the love you've shown me and my child."

"Oh, queen! how can you thank me I'll tell no one on earth that the queen has thanked me," cried Walpurga. "But it's only because you're so kind and want to make parting easy to me. Believe me, I'd gladly give every drop of blood in my veins for you and our child. Oh good God! our child—I daren't say that any longer. I, must go; but when I get home, I'll have my own child again."

"Yes, Walpurga; that is what I was about to tell you. The greatest happiness on earth is to be at home, and, by this time, you must have seen that it is all one, whether that home be a palace or a cottage."

"You're right there; you can't get more than your fill of eating and sleeping, anywhere. My Hansei'll be here to-morrow morning. May I bring him to the queen and to the king, and to the good ladies and gentlemen of the court, so that he may thank them, too?"

"Never mind that, Walpurga. There's no need of it. Indeed, Doctor Gunther forbade my taking leave of you; but I may, for all that, say good-by to you again, to-morrow. Believe me, I feel very sorry to part with you."

"If the queen wishes it, I'll remain, and my husband and my whole brood can come too."

"No, you had better go home again. If I ever get into your neighborhood, I will pay you a visit. I shall not fail to tell my son how kind you've been to him. He shall never forget you."

Walpurga had put the child in the cradle and cried out;

"Just look! he's talking. We grown-up folks don't understand what the children say, but he understands us." Walpurga now joyfully related that the prince had kissed her, and tried to persuade him to give his mother a kiss, but he would not.

"I shall leave something good for you behind me,"

said Walpurga to the queen. "I've found something that'll be good for you." Her face glowed with pleasure, and the queen asked:

"What is it?"

"I've found a friend, one of the best of friends, for you. Madame Gunther can speak right to one's heart; just as you do, but in a different way. I think you ought to visit her right often. It would do you good if you could, once in a while, spend an hour in a good neighbor's house. You'd always feel much better after it."

Walpurga eagerly told how delightful it was to visit one's neighbors. The queen smiled at Walpurga's ignorance of the conditions of court life, and explained to her that she could only have intercourse with those who visited the palace. Walpurga was very sorry that she could not bring about a meeting of the two ladies.

The queen retired.

"Now she's gone," said Walpurga. "I've said nothing at all; and I feel as if I had ever so much to say to her." She felt as if she ought not to leave the queen—as if she were her only true friend, a faithful companion who, if others were to menace her queen with harm, would hasten to her aid.

She thought of the time the queen had kissed her. How much they had experienced together since that time. Could it be possible that it was scarcely a year ago.

Cowering beside the cradle, she was silent for a long while. At last she softly sang:

"My heart doth bear a burden,
And thou hast placed it there;
And I would wager e'en my life
That none doth heavier bear."

Her voice trembled with emotion. The child slept. She got up and told Mademoiselle Kramer that she intended to take leave of all in the palace. Mademoiselle Kramer dissuaded her from doing this. So Walpurga only went in search of Countess Irma, but did not find her, as she had gone to a party at her brother's house. Walpurga told the maid that she intended to leave early the next morning, and that she would be very sorry if she

did not have a chance to say good-by. Meanwhile, she took leave of the maid, and recommended her to take great care of the good countess so that she might always keep well. Walpurga held out her hand to the maid, but was obliged to draw it back again, for the latter had both hands in the pockets of her silk apron, and, as if mocking Walpurga, merely curtsied to her.

"The higher people are, the better they are," said Walpurga, when she got back to her room. "The queen's the highest and best of them all."

Walpurga was sent for by Countess Brinkenstein, who was standing in the same place and in the same position as when she had received the nurse, nearly a year ago. She had seen this rigid lady almost every day. In all that time she had not become more familiar, but had treated Walpurga with unvarying kindness. It now seemed as if her disposition, or perhaps her office, required her to dismiss Walpurga in a formal manner.

"You have behaved well," said Countess Brinkenstein, with a kindly motion of the hand; "their majesties are satisfied with you. And now, farewell; and keep yourself good."

She did not rise, nor offer her hand to Walpurga. She merely nodded in token of farewell, and Walpurga left.

Although this mode of dismissal was by no means over-gentle or courteous, it, nevertheless, afforded Walpurga great satisfaction. She felt as if she had received a sort of honorable discharge. Although Countess Brinkenstein had ruled with almost military severity, she had always been the same and could always be relied upon. And this consistency was not without its due influence on Walpurga's mind.

In Walpurga's room stood two large chests, filled to the very top and locked. She had received many presents during the year, and enough money to buy a moderate-sized farm. She would sit down, now on one and now on the other chest, and when she at last lay down to rest, she still cast a wistful eye on her treasures. Like wandering spirits, her thoughts roved through the apartments of the palace, and then to her cottage at home, through the garden and over the mountains, until she was

suddenly awakened by the crying of the child. She was obliged to ask herself whether it was her own, or a strange child. She speedily quieted the prince, but remained beside his cradle. "Sleep shan't steal another minute of the time that's left us," said she softly.

Day dawned. Walpurga nursed the child for the last time. A tear dropped on its head; it looked up at her and then fell asleep, resting against her heart. She whispered softly into its little left hand, which she held to her lips.

She put the child in the cradle again, fixed one more sad look upon it, then, with her back turned, walked around the cradle thrice, and, at last, said to Mademoiselle Kramer:

"I'm going now; it's time."

The servants came and carried the chests away. Walpurga was in so forgiving a mood, that she even took leave of the Frenchwoman. She did not look back toward the cradle, but went downstairs, and ordered the boxes to be carried to an inn near the palace, where she had asked Hansei to meet her. She thought he would surely be on hand by that time, for she had told him the very hour when he could meet her. But Hansei was not there.

Although it was early in the day, there was life and bustle at the inn, which was frequented by the court servants. There was loud carousing, and some liveried servants were inveighing against their masters who, at Count Wildenort's soirée of the previous night, had kept them waiting in the porter's lodge, and the coachman on the box, for nearly three hours. It was said that Count Wildenort had obtained royal permission to set up a roulette table, that there had been high play, and that the king had also been there, but not the queen.

Walpurga sat behind the screen with the hostess, and was seated on the largest of the chests. She went to the front of the house to look for Hansei, but he did not come. Baum brought her a message that she was to go to Countess Irma, but not until nine o'clock. Walpurga wandered about town as if lost. "How the people run past each other," thought she; "no one knows who the other

is, and hasn't time to ask." At that hour of the day, round hats are not seen on the streets. None but the cap-wearing population is now represented. Bakers' men and butchers' boys whistling merrily while at their work, are serving bread and meat. Servant-maids stand at the street corners waiting while milk is measured out to them, and market-women from the country hurry to their posts, with baskets and hand-barrows.

"It'll be just the same to-morrow again, and you'll be gone. Indeed, it don't concern you to-day," said Walpurga to herself, while she looked on at their busy doings. Just then a large bookseller's shop was opened, and her picture hung in the window. What did it matter to her? No one concerned himself about her feelings.

"To-morrow the picture will still be hanging there; it'll be all the same, whether you're here or not. I believe it's all the same, whether you're in the world or out of it," added Walpurga, as a hearse went by and no one cared to inquire whom they were burying. Every one went his own way.

With heavy heart, Walpurga walked on, feeling as if something were drawing her back to the palace and to the child. She went on until she reached the gate by which Hansei must come. But still he came not.

"If he doesn't come at all—if the child at home is ill—if it is dead!" Walpurga was almost frightened to death with thoughts of what might be. She seated herself on a bench near the gate. Horsemen were galloping past, and a blind invalid soldier was playing a merry waltz on his organ.

A clock struck nine, and Walpurga walked through the town. At the palace gate she found Hansei, and his first words were:

"God greet you, Walpurga; you're here at last. Where have you been running to? I've been looking for you, the last two hours."

"Come in here," said Walpurga, leading Hansei into a covered way. "They don't speak so loud here."

It turned out that, in her last letter, Walpurga had told Hansei to come to the palace, and not to the inn. She begged him to forgive her, for she had been so confused

while writing, and then she said: "Now let me give you a kiss of welcome. Thank God, all are well. I need lots of love and kindness."

She asked him to wait at the door of Irma's apartment, while she went in. Irma was still in bed, but, as soon as she heard Walpurga's voice, asked her to enter. The countess looked lovely in *deshabille*, but she was quite pale, and her loosened hair lay in wild profusion on the pillow.

"I wanted to give you something to remember me by," said Irma, raising herself, "but I thought the best thing I could give you would be money. Take what's lying there. Take it all; I want none of it. Take it; don't be afraid, it's real gold, won in honest play. I always win—always— Take out your handkerchief and wrap the money up in it."

Irma's voice was hoarse. The room was so dimly lighted that Walpurga looked about in fear, as if she were in some enchanted apartment; and yet she knew the maid, the tables, the chairs, and could hear the screaming of the parrot in the next room. She knew all this, but she could not help thinking that there might be something wrong about the money. She hurriedly made the sign of the cross over it, and then put it in her pocket.

"And now, farewell," said Irma; "may you be happy; a thousand times happy. You are happier than all of us. When I don't know where to go in this world, I shall come to you. You'll receive me, won't you? and will make room for me at your hearth? Now go! go! I must sleep. Farewell, Walpurga, don't forget me. No thanks; not a word. I'll soon come to you, and then we'll sing again; aye, sing. Farewell!"

"I beg of you, let me say only one single word!" cried Walpurga, grasping her hands. "We can't, either of us, know which of us may die, and then it would be too late."

Irma pressed her hand over her eyes, and nodded assent. Walpurga continued:

"I don't know what ails you. Something's going wrong with you, and it may go worse yet. Your hands are often so cold and your cheeks so hot. I wronged you that

day—the second day after I came here. Forgive me! I'll never wrong you again, even in thought; and no one shall. No one shall ever slander you to me; but, I beg of you, leave the palace as soon as you can! Go home to—"

"Enough, enough," said Irma, deprecatingly, and holding her hands before her face as if Walpurga's words were stones hurled at her. "Enough," added she, "farewell; do not forget me."

She held out her hand to Walpurga, who kissed it. The hand was hot, as if with fever.

Walpurga left. The parrot in the ante-room was still crying: "God keep you, Irma." Walpurga started with terror, and hurried away as if some one were after her.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN Walpurga came out to Hansei, he asked: "Shall I go in, too?"

"No, we're ready."

"I think I ought to go to the king and queen. I've got a good deal to say to them."

"No; that won't do at all."

"Why not? I know how to talk to them."

He had frequently rehearsed what he intended to say to the king and queen. He would let them know that he deserved something more for giving up his wife for so long a time.

Walpurga found it difficult to make him understand that it would not do to press the matter. Hansei was not inclined to give up the point, and was, moreover, ashamed of confessing to the innkeeper that he had not sat at the same table with their majesties, and that he had not even seen them.

Walpurga, who herself needed support, was now obliged to make a double effort in order to pacify Hansei, who threatened to become rude and troublesome.

"But I may see your prince? You still have a right to take me there?" asked Hansei.

"Yes, yes," replied Walpurga, "that can be done."

She, too, was herself glad to have a chance to see the child once more, and this would furnish a good excuse. "What matters it if Mademoiselle Kramer or Frau von Gerloff make sport of Hansei? Day after to-morrow all these people will be nothing to me, and I shall be nothing to them." Her cheeks glowed with excitement, while she hurriedly led Hansei toward the prince's apartments. She was met at the door by Mademoiselle Kramer, who, when Walpurga stated her wish, answered:

"No; it can't be done. You must not go in again. Doctor Gunther is there and the child is crying and screaming terribly. Go; in God's name, go."

Mademoiselle Kramer disappeared, closing the door after her. Walpurga heard the child cry, and was not allowed to go in and help it. She was shut out—thrust out of doors. Shame at the treatment she had received in Hansei's presence, and anger at these cruel, ungrateful people struggled within her. At last, she said:

"Come, Hansei; we mustn't demean ourselves."

"Of course not," said Hansei. "It's plain enough that this is the way they treat folks when they have no further need for them."

"Nor do we need them any more. Thank God, that's over," said Walpurga.

She left the palace in an angry mood, and Hansei muttered to himself that he would thrash the first man he met on the way.

They returned to the inn where the chests had been left. They met Baum there, and Hansei again said:

"I'd swear that he's no one but Zenza's Jangerl."

"Jangerl's in America," insisted Walpurga. "I beg of you, don't trouble yourself about other matters. Let's hurry and get away from here."

"I've arranged to stay for another day. I'd like to see the sights, and would like to go to the theater for once in my life, and then—"

"Some other time—I want to get home to my child."

"You've been away so long that you needn't mind waiting a day longer."

Walpurga insisted and Hansei was obliged to yield,

"Why do you always look at me?" asked Hansei.
"It seems as if you scarcely know me any more."

"I'd forgotten what true, blue eyes you have."

"Well, and so I've been so little in your thoughts that you didn't even remember how I look."

"Be quiet; I thought of you always. What sort of eyes has the child?"

"Bright and clear ones, and there's never been anything the matter with them."

Walpurga wanted to know what color its eyes were, and whether their color had changed, as had been the case with the prince. But Hansei did not know, and was quite vexed that his wife asked him questions about matters that he knew nothing of.

At last they mounted the wagon.

It drove by the palace, and, in spite of the rattling of the wheels over the stones, it seemed to Walpurga as if she could hear the prince crying.

"I, too, must wean myself," said Walpurga, weeping silently.

As soon as they had passed the city gates, Hansei began abusing the court. "They might have sent us home in a coach; but that's the way with them. They'd rather fetch our wives than take 'em back again." Whenever he said anything, he would look about as if his boon companions were present to nod their approval. "They might have let us have a pair of horses at least; indeed, they ought to have told us to keep them, for they've got more than they know what to do with, in the royal stables," said he.

Walpurga had so often told every one that her husband was coming to take her home in a wagon, that no arrangements had been made for that purpose; and now when Hansei grumbled at their want of consideration, she remembered her mistake and, without confessing it, endeavored to quiet him.

"I beg you, for all the world," said she, "don't say anything against the court. They can't help it. If the king or queen knew of these things, they'd gladly do everything. But you've no idea how little the queen knows of the world; of what costs money, of what has to

be bought, or earned, or paid, she has no notion at all. She's just like the angels. They can't count money any more than she can, and have nothing to do with it. She's as dear as an angel, too. She takes the words out of your heart, and gives you such good ones in return." When she stopped and found that Hansei made no reply, she bit her lips with vexation. How she would have been praised if she had uttered such remarks to Countess Irma or Mademoiselle Kramer. But he behaved as if what she had said were nothing at all. A feeling of discontent struggled within her, but she repressed it. "Yes, I, too, must get used to the change," thought she to herself. "It's all over. Where I'm going, they'll not make much of everything I say." For a long while she was silent. She felt that looking into life-size double-mirrors was now at end. At last she thought of what the queen had told her: "When you get home, be patient with your people. The way to have peace on earth is to be patient with one another, and to do good to others without hope of recompense. Those who look for no reward are repaid sevenfold." When she left home her mother had given her a piece of bread, with which to deaden her homesickness while at the palace, but the queen had given her words and thoughts that were as bread, for they, too, were life-sustaining and, moreover, long-enduring.

It seemed as if a ray from the queen's sunny nature rested upon Walpurga's countenance. She regained her composure, and calm and gentle thoughts now filled her mind. Suddenly she seized her husband's hand and said:

"Now, God be praised, we hold fast to each other again. You must have lots of patience with me. I've been among strangers, but you'll soon see that I'll be all right again at home."

"Yes, yes, it's all right," said Hansei.

Wherever they alighted by the way, Hansei would tell the folk at the inn:

"This is my wife: she's been nurse to the crown prince, and now, thank God, we're well to do."

He had become boastful, but Walpurga remained silent in the presence of others. It was only when they were in the wagon that she became talkative. She asked many

questions and Hansei had much to relate, but she heard little of what was said. She was forever thinking of her child, which seemed to be dancing on the mountain peaks; just like the moon which stood in the sky in broad daylight, it ever seemed to move along with them.

"And has it blue eyes?" asked she suddenly, while Hansei was giving her a circumstantial account of the cow that was again giving milk.

"I don't know what color the calf's eyes are," said Hansei, laughing.

"Oh, don't think hard of me. I can't think of anything but our child. If we traveled as fast as my thoughts, we'd be home in a twinkling, as tailor Schneck says."

She smiled and checked herself and, soon after, continued: "Oh, how could I ever have stayed away from you so long? It isn't true. I've always been at home and now I'm coming. I'm coming to you, my child. Didn't you hear some one cry, Hansei?" said she, looking round. "I hear some one crying; it sounds like a child."

"Do be quiet. You're enough to frighten one out of his senses."

Walpurga would often look back, for it seemed to her as if she could hear a child crying.

In the city a child *was* crying, and those who were about it could not quiet it. Their diamonds, their gold, their soldiers, were all of no avail. Behind her and before her, Walpurga heard nothing but the crying of a child.

"Why do you shut your eyes?" asked Hansei.

"Oh," replied Walpurga, "I feel like the father of Wastl the weaver. When he was cured of his blindness, he used to say that the trees came toward him, and that everything blinded him. I too, feel as if I had seen nothing during this whole time. Look! there's the first man with a green hat, and he has his game-bag on his back; and the trees have kept on growing of themselves, while I was away. I don't know how I'll go through it all and not die, for I shouldn't like to die just now. I want to walk about with my child. Oh dear, good Hansei, don't give her a stepmother."

"Wife, wife," said Hansei, quieting her, "you're making fools of both of us. I'm quite sure that comes of your not having eaten a thing all day."

He insisted upon stopping at the next inn, where Walpurga was obliged to drink some wine. There was, indeed, wine in her chest, that is, the six bottles with silver foil, which the doctor had sent. But she wished to take that to her mother.

Although it was in broad daylight, Walpurga fell asleep in the wagon. When she awoke, she silently took her husband's hand in hers and held it for a long while. In the last little town this side of their village, they stopped again, in spite of Walpurga's protests. Hansei asserted that the grandmother did not expect them before the next day, and that they would find nothing to eat at home. He ordered a bounteous meal, as if he were laying in a supply for several days. Walpurga fell to heartily, and at last they quite forgot themselves, for Doctor Kumpan entered the inn. He was quite affable toward Walpurga and drank heartily with Hansei. He then called him aside and enjoined him to treat his wife considerately.

When they at last got into the wagon, half of the town had gathered about the inn, in order to have a look at the crown prince's nurse. Doctor Kumpan ordered the postillion, who was not in uniform, to take his post-horn with him, and the handsome, dark-eyed, lively fellow blew his horn while they drove through the little town and along the road. The merry echoes resounded from the mountains and through the forests. Walpurga was almost ashamed to drive in this style, while the people were at work along the road; but Hansei felt a childish delight in the sound of the horn.

At last they caught a glimpse of the lake. Evening was already setting in.

"Those are swallows from home," said Walpurga. "The next village is ours. I see the church, and—hark! I hear the bells! I hear them with you, my child, and soon you'll hear them, in my arms; and your voice—your voice—coachman, drive faster; no, drive gently; drive just as you please, so that we don't upset. Stop here; we'll get out now. Stop! I tell you." She alighted,

but as soon as she had done so, she exclaimed: "No, I'll get in again. We'll get home sooner if we ride. But why don't mother and the child come out to meet me?"

"She thinks we won't be home till to-morrow," cried Hansei.

"Then maybe she isn't at home at all, and has gone off with the child to visit some neighbor."

"Maybe so; but I think not."

"Don't you see a child there, running across the road? Is that it? Is it?"

"No, that's not our child. It can't run yet; but it can crawl about like a young dog."

"Who cut down the willow?" suddenly asked Walpurga.

"It was blown down by the storm, last spring."

Walpurga asked questions, but heeded not what she asked nor the answers she received. "Just see, how clear the brook is, and how swiftly it flows. I think it never used to flow so quickly. And they've built a new house here, and there they've felled the trees, and, just look at the beautiful little water-wagtails. They're larger and more beautiful with us than anywhere else."

They met a boy on a gray mare which he was riding to water. "That's Grubersepp's Waldl. How stout he's growing!"

"And it's a good beginning, that the first one to meet us should be a boy," said Hansei. "Waldl!" he called out to the lad, "come over to our house this evening and I'll give you some cherries." The boy made no reply and rode on.

"The two cows grazing there near the little girl, are ours," said Hansei.

Everything comes; everything except the mother and the child.

"Mother's at home," cried Walpurga, suddenly. "Mother's at home. I see smoke rising from our chimney; and there she stands by the fire with the child on her arms. Oh mother! Oh child! How is it possible that you don't notice anything? I'm coming! I'm here! I'm home! I'm coming!"

The wagon stopped before the house.

"Mother! Child!" cried Walpurga from the depths of her heart. The mother came out of the house, with the child on her arm.

Walpurga embraced her mother and kissed her child, but it cried and would not go to her.

Walpurga went into the room and sat down beside the stove. Her hands were folded on her lap, and she was weeping. She looked about her as if she were in a strange world.

"Leave her to herself for a little while; give her a breathing spell," said the grandmother to Hansei, who had gone out of the house, and who, with the driver's assistance, had been unloading the chests.

It was but a short time that Walpurga remained in the room, a prey to sad thoughts. The sun stood high over the opposite mountains, its rays making every blade of grass in the garden glitter like burnished gold. The mountains in the west were all aglow with light, and those opposite were reflected half-way across the lake. The day had been one of great excitement to Walpurga. What she had hoped for was now realized. There was nothing more to come. She felt as if she must start off again, as if she must be up and doing. And then it suddenly occurred to her that it was wrong to remain sitting there alone, while her mother and her child were out of doors, and that it was almost a crime to pass a moment away from them.

She went into the kitchen. The grandmother, with the child on her arm, was standing by the hearth in which there was a bright fire.

"Does my child eat broth?" asked Walpurga. Attracted by the voice, the child stared at her; but, as soon as Walpurga fixed her glance upon it, it nestled close to its grandmother, as if to hide itself.

"Yes, indeed. It eats anything, and is just like you. You did so, too. It would like to take a spoon and help itself, but it can't find its mouth. I'm making soup for you, you must eat something warm."

Walpurga's looks became more cheerful. The grandmother soon brought her some soup. Walpurga ate it and said;

"Ah, mother; the first soup I eat at home. Nothing on earth tastes like it. They can't make such soup as this at the palace."

The grandmother smiled, and stroked Walpurga's head with her hand, as if blessing her. She felt that Walpurga's joy at being home again affected her every thought and action.

"The home soup—yes, indeed," said she at last, and smiled; and, moved thereto by the grandmother's cheerful looks, the child laughed, too.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE soft glimmer of early dawn stole through the heart-shaped opening in the shutters of their little room. Down by the reedy bank the water-ousel piped its matin song. Walpurga awoke and listened to the breathing of her husband and child. Her life, now, is a threefold breath.

"Good-morrow, day. I'm home again," said she, softly. She felt so happy at the thought of being in her own bed. Suddenly, she folded her hands and said:

"I thank Thee, Lord! Now I know how it must be to wake in heaven and feel as if home were reached at last, to have all your loved ones with you, to know that parting's at an end, and that all will remain together forever. Now we'll live happily, in kindness and in righteousness. Grant us all good health, and put all evil away from us."

She closed her eyes and indulged in retrospection. Last night the grandmother had beckoned her to follow her into the little grassy garden back of the house. When they reached there, her mother had said: "Look up to those stars and tell me: Can you still kiss your husband and your child, with pure lips? If—God forbid—it be otherwise—"

"Mother!" Walpurga had cried. "Mother, I can. I raise my hand and call God to bear me witness, I am just as I was when I left home."

Said the mother: "That makes me happy. Now I'm content to die."

"No, mother; let's live together in happiness for many years to come."

"I'm content. And now let me give you a piece of advice; and mind what I tell you. You've been out in the wide world for nearly a year. You've been riding about in carriages, while I've been here in the cottage and garden, taking care of your child. But, for all that, my thoughts went out into the world, and far beyond, where coach and four never get to. Now listen to me and obey me."

"Yes, mother; with all my heart."

"Then mind what I tell you. Give yourself time to get used to things again, and don't ask for anything out of reason. You can't expect your child to love you yet. You've been away from it so long that it doesn't know you, and has become estranged. And so you must expect to find it with everything else. Your husband's been alone for nearly a year; his lot has been much harder than yours."

Here they were interrupted. Hansei called from the window and asked them what they were doing out there so late, in the dark.

"And now go to sleep," said the mother. "I've had your bed aired these three days. Sleep well. Good-night."

The mother led her daughter by the hand as if she were a little child, and when they had passed the threshold, she fell upon Walpurga's neck and hugged and kissed her in the dark.

Walpurga had closed her eyes, and, in thought, recalled all that had happened during the preceding night. Everything seemed double, just as with the stars that are reflected in the lake at night, making it seem as if there were two skies, one above and one in the waters below.

At the thought of the lake, Walpurga arose, quietly dressed herself, bent over her child and husband for a moment, softly opened the door, left the room, and went out of the house. She passed through the garden. The air was filled with the fragrance of the elder-bushes in the hedge. The finch on the cherry-tree warbled merrily, and she would fain have called out to him: "Be quiet; wake no one till I return."

She passed on. From the reedy banks of the lake,

where the water-ousel and the reed-sparrow were chirping their song, there flew up a flock of wild ducks, twittering while on the wing.

The sun rose, and the whole lake shone as if a softly undulating golden mantle had been spread over it.

Walpurga looked about her in all directions, and then, undressing herself in a trice, jumped into the lake. She dived and rose again, brushed her hair from her face and plashed about, as happy as if she were a fish at the bottom of the lake. The golden mantle of the lake assumed a purple hue, and Walpurga looked up at the purple sun, and over the glowing lake. "Thus it is," said she, "and thus it's right. I'm here again and yours again, and everything else is put away from me. I've never been away." Under the clustering willows, she hurriedly dressed herself, and felt so happy and cheerful that it cost her an effort to refrain from singing aloud. Blue and green dragon-flies hovered over the water. Swallows were flying over the lake and dipping their bills into the waters, which were gradually acquiring a paler hue, and from yonder forest resounded the cuckoo's note. A stork among the reeds seemed to watch Walpurga while she dressed herself. She noticed the bird rattling its great bill and waved it away. She hurried back to the house. The finch in the cherry-tree was still warbling its morning song, the two cows in the stable were lowing, but everything else about the house was still wrapped in silence. For a long while, Walpurga stood gazing at the flowers on the window-sill, and was delighted with the fragrance of the pinks and the rosemary. She had planted them while still a child, and before she had had a garden of her own. All the earth that she could then call her own, was contained in these flower-pots. Now she was able to buy many a broad field, but who could say whether they would give her as much joy as she now derived from these dingy, broken pots.

It seemed as if the pinks had purposely blossomed, in honor of the return of her who had planted and cared for them. There were scarcely any buds left, but even these few were putting out their little red tongues. Walpurga returned to her pinks again and again, and could not get

enough of their fragrance. Suddenly, she laughed to herself at the thought of an old story that her mother had told her about blessed Susanna, who, when hungry and thirsty, could satisfy herself by smelling a flower. "Yes, but that wouldn't satisfy my folks," said she with a smile, and went back into the house.

Mother, husband and child were still asleep. Walpurga sat by the cradle for a little while. Then she went out to the kitchen, and kindled the first fire on her own hearth. Silently she watched at the rising flame, while the sounds of the matin bell of the chapel by the lake fell on her ear. She pressed both hands firmly against her heart, as if to hold fast the happiness with which it was overflowing.

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT! at work already?" said Hansei, entering the kitchen, and bearing in his arms the child, whose only garment was its little shirt.

"Good-morning! Good-morning to both of you," exclaimed Walpurga, with joyful voice. Her every tone and every word seemed to say that she could feed and satisfy them all with her love.

"Good-morning, my child!" said she. The baby stretched out its arms toward her, but, when she offered to take it, turned its back on her and laid its head upon Hansei's shoulder.

"Have patience with it; it doesn't know you right yet," said Hansei; "after all, such a young child is just like an animal, and don't know its mother if she's been living away from it."

As if to refute Hansei's humiliating philosophy, the child turned round again, stared at the fire, pursed up its little mouth, and blew just as when one does when blowing the fire.

"Grandmother taught her that," said Hansei. "It can do lots of other clever things. Grandmother never slept so late as she does to-day. She seems to feel that she's no longer obliged to draw the cart all by herself. No one'll grudge it to her. Yes, there never was a better woman in all the wide world, than your mother."

"Never was! isn't she so still?" asked Walpurga, in alarm.

Her mother had been so unutterably happy yesterday. Who knows but what her joy had killed her? They had been so happy that perhaps misfortune must come, for nothing is perfect in this world.

Walpurga trembled with fear while these thoughts flashed through her mind.

"I'll go look after mother," said she, and went to her room.

Hansei followed, carrying the child on his arm. And now, when the mother awoke, she said: "Well, and so they have to awaken me. Am I still a young girl who sleeps late and dreams when the elder-flower is in blossom? Yes, now I remember my dream. I dreamt that I was young again and was a servant at the farm on the other side of the mountains, and that your father came. It was on a Sunday, and he and I went off together to my brother's, in the pitch hut. We were standing by the brook where the elder grows, and father was on the other side, reaching out his hand to me, so that I could jump across, when you woke me. I can feel his hand in mine yet."

"God be praised that you're awake again," interposed Walpurga. The mother smiled and continued:

"And now, Walpurga, I've only one thing to ask of you. If you don't mind doing so, give me a florin or two. I'd like to go home once more, to the place where I was born and was in service, and where my brother lives; and I would like to have a few pence about me, to give to the poor people who are still there."

"Yes, mother; you shall have all you want. We've plenty, thank God."

"I'd like to know," said the mother, "why I dreamt of my home last night."

"That's plain enough," said Hansei. "A few days ago, when the wood-carver from your village was here, they were saying that the owner of the freehold farm there would like to sell his place. But who's got money enough to buy that?"

"You see," said the old woman to Walpurga, "what

a heretic and believer in dreams your husband has become. He learned all that from the innkeeper. And now give me the child and hurry out of here. Come, you little chamois-kid, jump about and dance."

She sang to the child, and it stretched forth its arms toward her, just like a bird glad to return to its nest.

Hansei and Walpurga left the room. The child lay beside the grandmother, and the two were quite happy together.

"And now I'll milk the cow," said Hansei.

"You?"

"Yes. Who else? Mother can't do everything."

"No; let me do that now."

Walpurga went out to the stable with her husband; she wanted to relieve him of the task, but it would not do, and Hansei said:

"There's no need of it, either; that'll all soon be different. When you become landlady, we'll have two servants, at least, and they can see to the milking. We'll have room for six cows besides our own, and will be entitled to have as many more on the mountain meadow. Then you can make butter and cheese, and do what you like."

Hansei seemed to be talking to the cow. He did not care to see what sort of a face his wife would make. But now she had, at all events, heard of the matter, and they could talk it over, afterward.

Walpurga was about to reply, when the stable door opened, and a girl entered, carrying a cake on a large platter.

She removed the cloth with which it was covered, and said:

"My master, the landlord of the Chamois, sends this with his kind greetings, and his welcome to the wife."

"You silly thing!" exclaimed Hansei, jumping to his feet, and looking quite oddly with the milk-pail buckled fast to him. "You silly thing! People don't carry cakes into a stable. Take it into the room, and when you get home, give them my best thanks, and tell the innkeeper, our godfather, to honor us with a visit soon—no, we'll

come to see him this forenoon; and now you may go."

Walpurga remembered that her mother advised her not to attempt to change things at once. She determined, for the present, to listen to everything, and let affairs go on in their own way, keeping her eyes open in the mean while. Time would show how the land lay.

Hansei went on milking the cows, and Walpurga said nothing.

"One can't always have the world all to one's-self, the way it was down at the lake this morning; but while there's such a bustle about my ears I must keep my own counsel," thought she.

When Hansei had finished milking, and stood there with a pail in each hand, he said:

"What do you think of it?"

"It's splendid milk; and there's lots of it, too."

"No, I mean what do you think of the landlord of the Chamois?"

"It's very polite of him, and I'm much obliged to him for it. We must try to get even with him."

"There's no need of that; we'll have to pay dear enough for the cake. But we're not so stupid, either. You'll soon see, Walpurga, I know which side my bread's buttered on as well as he does. Yes," continued Hansei, "if I'd only had a chance to talk to the king, you'd have soon have found out that Hansei's not the dullest fellow in the world."

"I knew that long ago. I don't need the king to tell me that."

At breakfast, Walpurga was delighted to find that the child would take a few spoonfuls of porridge from her: but it would not go to her, and cried as if its heart would break when she tried to take it.

"Have you counted up all we're worth? Of all the money you sent, not one penny's been taken. That is, I took fifteen florins to buy me a rifle."

"That was right," said Walpurga. And with all her confidence in him, she resolved that she would not hand Hansei the money that Irma had given her on the day she left the palace. She knew not why, but she felt a dread

of the gold that had come to her in so strange a manner. She had not yet looked at it herself. Besides, she felt that it might be well to keep something in reserve for a rainy day. It might be better if all were not displayed at once. She promised to reckon it all up before noon, and expressed her regret that she had no closet in which to pack away all the pretty things she had brought with her in the chest.

"I wouldn't unpack at all, if I were you," said Hansei. "You might as well wait till we have our inn. You'll find enough chests and trunks there."

Walpurga made no answer. Hansei looked at her curiously, but she remained silent.

"Why don't you say something about the matter?" he inquired at last.

"Because you haven't told me about it right. Come now, what do you really mean?"

Hansei informed her that every one said the most sensible thing he could do would be to buy out the landlord of the Chamois. There couldn't be a better hostess in the world than Walpurga, and they would have a larger custom than any house in the land. They could alter the sign—that would be a clever stroke and would draw more than anything else. It should no longer be "The Chamois," but the "The King's Nurse," or "The Prince's Nurse," instead. There was a painter thereabouts, who would make a new sign, representing Walpurga with the prince in her arms. People would be drawn together from all parts of the neighborhood; there wouldn't be tables and chairs enough, and money would pour in on them from all sides. The bargain was a fair one; the innkeeper had named a reasonable price. "Every one says so," said Hansei, "and now what have you to say? for it's for you to decide."

"I don't care for what the people say," began Walpurga, "but tell me, frankly, have you concluded the purchase? If you have, I've nothing to say. I wouldn't have you break your word nor disgrace yourself, for all the world. You're the husband and your word must be kept."

"That's right; if only every one could have heard that."

"What need you care whether they hear it or not?"

"Why, the stupid people think that you rule everything, because the money comes from you. To be frank with you, the bargain isn't concluded; it all depends upon your consent."

"And if I were to say 'no,' would you be angry? Answer me; why are you silent now?"

"Well, it would grieve me to the heart if you did."

"I don't say 'no,'" answered his wife, soothingly. "But there's one thing we'd better have an understanding about, at once. I never want to hear another word as to where the money comes from. You were alone all that time; you've had to suffer for it, as well as I, and, take my word for it, I shan't forget it. But, as I told you before, I don't say 'no.' We're husband and wife and will talk over and settle everything together. If the money's to bring discord, I'd rather throw the whole of it into the lake and myself in after it."

Walpurga wept, and Hansei, with choking voice, said: "For God's sake, don't weep. I feel as if my heart would break when you cry. I wouldn't have you cry, no, not for ten inns. Oh Lord! to cry on the very first morning! Depend on it nothing shall be done, unless you're perfectly satisfied."

Walpurga held out her hand to him, and, with the other, wiped away the tears which had relieved her overflowing heart. They heard visitors approaching. Walpurga hurried to the bedroom, for she would have no one see that she had been weeping. While in the room, she put the gold that Irma had given her into a pillow-case, and then hid it. One piece of the money had dropped on the floor. She picked it up and looked at the image of the king stamped upon it. "Such a king's head goes everywhere," said she. "If he could only be everywhere in thought, so as to set everything to rights. But that's more than any man can do. God alone can do that—How are they getting on in the palace? What will become of them all? Is it only a day since I left there?"

Lost in reverie, Walpurga remained in the room for a long while. At last, with a deep sigh, she awakened to the fact that, in this world, none can afford to give all his

thoughts to others. It was now her duty to take care of herself. Various neighbors and friends dropped in to welcome Walpurga. Hansei, who was all impatience, said that she had just gone to her room and would return in a little while. At last Walpurga came, radiant with joy and health. They all expressed themselves delighted to see her looking so well, spoke of the excellent reputation she enjoyed, and assured her that they took as much pleasure in her good fortune as if it were their own.

Walpurga thanked them heartily. The great cake which the innkeeper had sent was soon eaten up, for she offered some of it to every visitor.

"How goes it with old Zenza?" asked Walpurga.

"Just to think how good she is; she even remembers the old torment. Yes, your kindness was thrown away on her and her offspring," said several voices. She was soon informed that Zenza, with her son and Black Esther, had left the neighborhood. No one knew where they had gone, but the root-hut on the Windenreuthe now stood empty.

Nor did troops of beggars from the village and the neighboring country fail to present themselves. It must have been quickly noised about that Walpurga had returned, bringing a whole chestful of gold with her.

Walpurga was astonished to learn how many relations she had in the neighborhood. Many claimed relationship with her father, but were unable to state exactly in what degree, and some of the beggars, who disputed each other's claims, were soon involved in quarrels with each other. Walpurga dispensed modest gifts to all of them. They left in an ill-humor. What they had received had hardly been worth the trouble of going for it, and the highways and byways resounded with imprecations launched against Walpurga, who, they said, had become proud and stingy. But there were soon fresh troops of beggars. It was like scattering wheat among sparrows; more were constantly coming.

"Take your whip and drive the whole pack of beggars away," suddenly cried a loud voice from the road.

It was the innkeeper, accompanied by his two dogs Dachsel and Wachsel, who added their voices to that of

their master, until at last a beggar gave one of the dogs a kick that sent him off yelping. The innkeeper now swore more violently than before, but Walpurga went out and, in quite a determined tone, requested him not to interfere, and then doubled her gifts to all of them. She thus escaped a confidential and patronizing familiarity on the part of the innkeeper. She was, as yet, uncertain how she ought to behave toward him. He was evidently Hansei's seducer. If she were to show herself angry at him at the start, it might lead to much vexation and would destroy all her influence. On the other hand, she found it difficult to force herself to greet him in a friendly manner.

When he had entered the room, he asked Hansei:

"Have you told her everything?"

"Of course."

"And is she agreed?"

"She says she'll be satisfied with anything I do."

Walpurga came into the room, and with the words, "Welcome, and many congratulations to the hostess of the Chamois," the innkeeper extended his hand to her.

"Thanks for the first; but, before I accept the second, my husband must be landlord of the Chamois."

"Heigho!" exclaimed the innkeeper, "how clever! how studied! how dignified and polite! Look here, Hansei! haven't I always told you that you've got a wife who might be a queen?"

"And why not, if my husband were a king?"

The innkeeper's fist descended on the table, and he laughed so heartily at this clever sally, that his two dogs began to bark and thus accompanied his laughter with their applause. He showed the other visitors that it would not do to weary their hosts. He left soon afterward, the rest of the company going with him.

CHAPTER III.

"AND for your mother I'll build a snug room looking toward the garden, where she can take her comfort. I always knew it before, but it wasn't till you were away, that I found out what a treasure she is to

us. If the Lord only lets us keep her with us for many a year to come. Yes, your mother shall have the best room in the house."

Thus spake Hansei, with gleeful countenance. Walpurga inquired: "Where do you mean to build?"

Hansei looked around as if to express his surprise at her asking such a question. He had yielded so far as to promise that nothing should be done without his wife's consent. He thought that this was all that could in reason be expected of him, and that it was best to finish up the business at once.

With great self-command, he said:

"Why, at our inn, to be sure. I shan't do anything to this tumble-down cottage. But I've already told them that they mustn't disturb the nut-tree. You'll be surprised when you see how full it is. We shall get three measures of nuts this year, and a nut year is a good one for boys."

Walpurga clapped her hand to his mouth and, with downcast eyes, said: "You're a dear, good fellow: but, believe me, I know you better than you do yourself. I'm glad that you're much sharper than you used to be. I often used to tell you not to be so bashful and forever keeping in the background. You've so much common sense; more, indeed, than all the rest of them. If you could only have been behind the door, when I told the queen about you; and she promised me faithfully that she'll come to see us when she visits the mountains next year."

Hansei complacently swallowed the praise that his wife bestowed upon him, and kept on smiling to himself for some time afterward.

Husband and wife praised and extolled each other—a custom more honored in the breach than the observance, at least among peasants, who would feel ashamed if they knew of it. Their coming together, after so long a separation, seemed like a new wooing and wedding. The question of the purchase of the inn prevented them, however, from fully realizing this, and even threatened to imperil their domestic happiness.

"So you're agreed that we'll be host and hostess of the Chamois?" inquired Hansei.

"I've told you already that we'd talk it over; and so you think you'll make a good landlord?"

"Not so good a landlord as you will a landlady. That's what everybody says; and the landlady's always the chief point. You'd be the best landlady, for you can earn your bread with your tongue, just as the parson does; and that'll help us to get a penny or two more for our wine and everything else. • You've got a way of looking right into people's hearts, and can give and take, and that's the best sign that you're made to be a landlady."

Hansei did not understand how Walpurga could still hesitate. The highest ideal of the young mountaineer is to be an innkeeper; to supply every one with meat and drink, and to live by the profits of it; to give feasts and, at the same time, be the merriest one at them; to receive money while others spend it; to have his house the rendezvous of all, no matter how varied their pursuits and interests; to be the helper and adviser of every one; the man with whom all keep on good terms, who knows all that is going on, all about bargains and prices, and who, like the lord of the manor in the olden time, receives a profit whenever cow, or farm, or house change hands. And besides, what others eat and drink tickles his palate, too, and he doesn't grow thin upon it. And then, like the parson, he would derive profit from baptisms, marriages and funerals; to say nothing of the strangers who would come during the summer and would be obliged to pay tribute to the landlord, because the mountains are so high and the lake so deep, and because he allows them to see it all. Yes, an inn is like a great lake—all the little streams that flow from the different mountain rills concentrate there.

Walpurga stared at her husband in surprise, while she listened to his animated and yet detailed description of the advantages of innkeeping. She almost felt inclined to favor his plan, and thought to herself: "Perhaps it would be the most sensible thing after all; for I'll never feel quite at home again in the old, narrow ways of life that I once used to lead. I've grown different, and must have something different." Frankly and sincerely, she again assured him that she was not opposed to the

project, but that it would be well to go about it cautiously.

"And do you know what's best of all?" asked Hansei. "We're to have a post-office here—the judge himself says so—and if it should fail us, you could easily bring it about. You'll give the village a great name. Indeed, you'll make a town of it, and the houses will be worth twice as much as they now are."

He wanted his wife to go up to the village with him at once, in order to look at the inn; but Walpurga said:

"Let me get a good rest in our old house before we go up there. The inn won't run away. I can't tell you how happy I am to be in our house again. I feel as if I must try every chair. Everything seems so good at home. It's just as if every chair and every table had eyes, and was looking at me and saying: 'Yes, we still know you, and have waited for you'; and now, I beg of you, do let me rest awhile."

"Yes, yes; just stay," replied Hansei, walking up and down the room. Suddenly, as if called by some one, he went out and split several logs which he had laid aside.

Walpurga came out and looked at him with evident satisfaction.

"Yes," said he, "work will be kept up just as it always was. I shan't be a lazy landlord—rest assured of that; and I won't take to drinking, either. Are you going up to the village with me?" he inquired at last.

"Yes; but do come in."

Hansei was soon on the road, and was not a little proud to be seen entering the village with his wife. At the fountain near the town hall, there were women and girls with their tubs. As soon as they saw Walpurga, they came up to her and offered their greetings and congratulations.

The children were just leaving school. Walpurga called several of them to her, shook hands with them, and gave them kind messages to their parents. With saddened heart, she would hear of the death of such and such a one. The other children were gathered in groups, and would stand about, staring at her with surprise. Walpurga's being sent for and taken to the palace had

been as a fairy-tale to the village children; and now the fairy herself was standing there in broad daylight, and talking just as other people did.

At last Walpurga left them, but the children kept calling out her name, in order to prove that they still knew her.

When she and her husband walked on, the latter pointed toward the town hall. "Look!" said he, "I'll soon be there, too. It's almost certain that they'll elect me as one of the town council. I might even become a burgomaster. But I won't take that, for that would get an innkeeper into lots of trouble."

Walpurga observed that the idea of becoming a host had taken deep root in Hansei. She simply replied: "I find that you've seen a great deal of the world this year, but you must certainly have learned that it's every one's duty to care for his own, and that when one's poor and unfortunate, no one lends a helping hand."

"Certainly; but thank God! we don't need any one now; quite the contrary."

They were passing the house of Grubersepp, the wealthy farmer and, indeed, the richest man in the community. He was a tall, lean man, whose features always wore a sour expression. He was standing on the steps before his house, and Hansei greeted him civilly. Grubersepp, however, turned on his heel and walked off toward the stable. It would not do for a rich farmer like him to welcome a day laborer's child like Walpurga. The whole village might make fools of themselves on her account, but a rich farmer like Grubersepp knows his own importance too well. It would be mighty fine, indeed, if he were known to trouble himself about a creature who used to be glad if he would let her have a pint or two of milk on trust.

Hansei cried out aloud: "Good-day, Grubersepp! my wife's come back again."

Grubersepp acted as if he had not heard him, and went toward the stable.

The joy that Walpurga had experienced while receiving the greetings of the villagers was not enough to compensate her for her pain at the slight thus put upon her.

After all, as it was only a silly, narrow-minded farmer displaying his stupid peasant pride. Hadn't the king spoken to her, and had he ever spoken to such a dolt as he? But this did not satisfy her. Grubersepp was the first in the village, and to be slighted by him, or to incur his ill-will, was no trifling matter after all.

"I'll never be hostess to you, you old pitchfork," said Walpurga, looking toward the house; "I'll never pour out a glass of wine for you and say, 'God bless you!' with it."

"What are you saying?" said Hansei, as Walpurga uttered these words to herself.

"If we could buy that silly old pitchfork's land, I'd like it much better than the inn," she answered.

"Of course, that would be much finer; but we haven't enough money for that; and, even if we had, Grubersepp wouldn't sell. On the contrary, when a poor man has his eye on a field, he buys it up before he gets a chance at it."

When Hansei and Walpurga arrived at the inn, they found quite a crowd there. A new purchase of wine had just been opened, and, as usual on such occasions, the drinking was at the host's expense.

"Ah! here comes the new landlady," exclaimed several voices.

"Thank you," said Walpurga, "my husband hasn't concluded the bargain yet."

The hunter from Zell was there also, and Walpurga saw, at a glance, that her husband was caught in a net of flatterers. She soon got out of the room. The host and his wife showed her and Hansei through all the rooms and the cellars. Walpurga found it all very good, but kept saying that they would have to build and arrange everything anew.

"You're spoiled," said the innkeeper. "Here in the country, things are different from what they are in your palace. You seem to forget that one needn't drive a nail into this house for the next fifty years." Walpurga would not permit herself to be drawn into any discussion of the subject. On the way home, she remarked to her husband, that it would be well to have the house exam-

ined by some one who knew all about building matters, for neither of them understood anything about it, and to make anything out of the innkeeper, was like drawing blood from a stone.

Hansei was vexed that the bargain had not been concluded on the spot. He felt as if he could not remain in the old house another hour. Walpurga, on the other hand, wished to stave off the matter for a while. Besides that, as Hansei was obliged to admit, she suggested many points that required careful consideration.

That afternoon, Walpurga reckoned up all that belonged to her. It was a handsome amount. There was almost enough to pay for the inn, with the fields, meadows and woods belonging to it. One or two prosperous years would enable them to clear off the mortgage which they might be obliged to leave remaining on the property.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was evening. The grandmother was in the room and, in a tremulous voice, was singing her granddaughter to sleep. She, too, was singing the song:

"Oh, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee."

Walpurga and Hansei were the only ones at the table, and he could scarcely eat the potatoes as fast as she pared them. She would always put the best and finest before him. "Just think of it, Hansei," said she, looking so happy while she spoke; "the best things in the world—sleep, sunlight, water, eggs, boiled potatoes and salt—are all the same in the palace and in the cottage. The king and the queen can't have them better than we, and the very best of all is the same everywhere. And do you know what it is?"

"Yes; a good kiss. It wouldn't be any better from the queen's lips than from yours; and there I'm like the king, too, especially when I'm as nicely shaved as to-day," he added, taking his wife's hand and passing it over his smooth chin.

"You're right; but I didn't mean to say it that way.

Love's the same, too. It can't be different up there from what it is here."

"I don't know what's come over you," said Hansei. "I never thought you were such a witch, so clever and so wide-awake. It provokes me that people should be so familiar with you, and treat you as if you were still the same old Walpurga."

"You ought to be glad that I'm still the same, or else I shouldn't be your wife."

Hansei stopped chewing the potato that was in his mouth and stared at his wife in surprise. At last he hurriedly bolted down the potato and said: "Now that joke don't please me at all. It's wrong to joke about such things." Both were silent.

In the next room sat the mother singing:

"My heart doth bear a burden,
And thou hast placed it there";

And the song seemed to touch them both.

"I've got something to tell you," said Hansei, at last. "It's been my habit, for the last year, to go up to the Chamois after supper, and especially on Saturday evenings. Sometimes I've taken a drop, and sometimes not; and as this is Saturday and as they'll all be there, I think I'd better go up once more, just for your sake."

"For my sake?"

"Yes, for fear the people might say: 'Now he's got to duck under, for his gracious wife has come home.'"

"Why do you always worry about what the people say? Suppose they were to say: 'What sort of a man is this? His wife was gone for a year, and on the second night after her return, he runs off to the inn?'"

Hansei, unable to parry this thrust, stared at her in surprise. At last he said: "I think I'll go, after all. You won't think hard of it, will you?"

"Go, if you like," replied Walpurga, and Hansei hurried off. Walpurga looked after him, while her eyes filled with tears. "Is this what I've so longed for?" thought she to herself. "Was it for this that I thought the minutes would never end, and felt as if I must chase the hours away?"

Her mother came in and, gently closing the door, said: "She sleeps sweetly."

The ruddy glow of the rosy setting sun illumined Walpurga's countenance, in which, it was plainly to be seen, a great change had taken place since that sun rose.

The child again began to cry. The grandmother went in to it, and Walpurga stealthily hurried in the direction of the lake. It was night. The waves were softly beating on the shore; the reed-sparrow was still chattering, and the water-hens kept up their twittering. Far up on the mountain, bright fires were burning; for it was Saturday night, and the mountain lasses were looking out for their swains. And now the moon rose over the summit of the Chamois hill and shone upon the lake. Walpurga, as if lost in reverie, stood there for some time, gazing into the lake. Then she turned toward home, but, instead of going into the room, quietly stole into the cellar. With almost superhuman strength, she moved the stone cabbage-tub from its place, dug a hole in the ground, placed the money that Irma had given her in it, and shoved the cabbage-tub back into its place again.

She was washing her hands at the pump, when she noticed that her mother was lighting the lamp in the room. She went in, staring at the light.

"Why do you stare at the light so?" asked her mother.

"Well, mother, I'm not used to a single light any more; in the palace, there are ever so many."

"But the people there have only one pair of eyes," replied the mother. "No, my child; that's not why you look so troubled. Tell me honestly, what's the matter?"

Walpurga frankly confessed that it almost broke her heart to think that her husband couldn't stay at home on the second evening after her return, but must go to the inn.

"Give me your hand," said the mother. "Yes, I've been thinking about your hands. I've noticed that you wash them whenever you've touched anything. That's very nice, but it won't do here. Your hands become soft and tender this last year, while mine's as hard as leather; and you'll soon have to harden your hands too. For God's sake, don't make your husband skittish, and don't

give him an ugly word. Take my word for it, he couldn't help going up there to-night, and it's Saturday night besides. It was just as if six horses were dragging him. He's got used to it, and habits are strong things that can't be changed at will. He's not bad; I'm sure of that. Let him have his own way, just as he's used to, and he'll soon be all right again."

Walpurga made no answer. She busied herself paring potatoes for her mother, who went on to say:

"The things that are God's gifts we have just as good as they have them in the palace."

"There! we've saved one poor soul," replied Walpurga with a smile, "I said the very same words to Hansei, a little while ago."

When they had finished paring the potatoes for the next day, the mother said:

"I'll tell you what. Let's close the front door, and sit on the little seat your father was so fond of, in the grassy garden back of the house. There we can talk to each other without being disturbed, and, as the lights are out, we'll have no visitors. Nor do we want any, for we're enough by ourselves."

"Oh God! if only my husband felt so, too."

"Let him alone at the inn. Thank God that we're alone together. Don't act like a deposed queen; it only makes it so much the harder for you."

Mother and daughter went out through the back door that led to the little garden, where they seated themselves on a bench which stood against the wall and opposite the stable window, and left the back door ajar so that they might hear the child if it should cry. They heard nothing, however, except the noise made by the cows while feeding. The moon was high, and the shimmering surface of the lake reflected its rays. Now and then, the *yodel* of some distant mountaineer, the barking of a dog, or the soft splash of an oar, were the only sounds that broke the silence.

"If the first two weeks were only over," said Walpurga, "I'd be better used to it."

"Don't wish for time to pass. It comes and goes of itself."

"Yes, mother; tell me everything I'm to do, I don't care to have my own will now."

"That won't do, either. Those who can walk alone must fall alone."

"I'll try to do my best."

"Very well. Tell me one thing: how is it in the palace about now?"

"About now? Dear me, it seems two years since I left there. By this time, the lamps have been lit in all the passageways, and downstairs, where the king and the queen are, they're just about leaving the table. But we have nothing to do with that. Mademoiselle Kramer is reading her book. She reads a book through every day; and my prince. O you poor child—"

Walpurga burst into tears. At the same moment, her own child began to cry and the two women hurried in.

"It was only dreaming," said the mother softly. "The child must feel that the right mother is come."

Walpurga again felt conscious of the double life she was leading.

Although she was at home, her thoughts were still at the palace. Everything seemed confused and indistinct, and when she found herself again sitting on the bench at her mother's side, she was obliged to stop and consider where she was.

"It seems to me," said the mother, "that those who possess so many worldly gifts as the king and queen and the quality have, can't take much time to think of the heavenly life hereafter."

Walpurga told her how pious they all were at court, and that the queen, although a Protestant, was especially so.

They conversed with each other in calm and gentle tones. Walpurga rested her head against her mother's heart and, at last, fell asleep there. The mother held her in her embrace, scarcely venturing to breathe, lest she might waken her. After they had been sitting there awhile, she awakened Walpurga and told her that she might catch cold and had better go to bed. Walpurga scarcely knew where she was and, while still rubbing her eyes, she asked: "Isn't my husband home yet?"

"Just go to bed, I'll help you," said the mother, and

she undressed Walpurga, as if she were a little child. Then she sat down by the bed and, taking her daughter's hand in hers, said: "You see, it's a queer thing when people who belong together have lived apart for a long time. They've become used to getting along without each other, and the only thing to do is to wait till they grow used to each other again. Take precious good care that you never speak an unkind word, and don't dare to think to yourself: 'If I only were away again, and out in the world.' If you harbor such thoughts, you'll be like a tree cut off at its roots and transplanted—it must die. Mind what I tell you! Whenever you can change anything according to your own notion, do so; but you'd better not attempt to alter what can't be altered. Make up your mind that it's got to be as it is, and submit. There's nothing so silly, in all the world, as to wish for what you can't have. When the wind blows and the rain descends, you'll often hear people say: 'If it were only fine weather to-day.' We can't change the weather outside of us; but we can see to it that there's fair weather inside. And what I was going to say is: see that you have fair weather within yourself and then all will be well."

"Yes; but what am I to do?"

"Make an effort this very night. Promise me, faithfully, that if you're awake when your husband comes home, you'll say to him, cheerfully, 'God greet you, Hans-sei!'"

"I can't do that, mother; indeed, I can't."

"But I tell you you must be able to do it, or else you're not a true wife and mother, and every piece of gold you've brought home with you will be as if a fiery demon were lurking in it. You promised to obey me, and at the very start you refuse."

"Yes, mother; I'll try my best."

"Well, then, good-night," said the mother, and returned to her room.

Walpurga lay there in silence. Anger and sorrow kept her awake. Her child had become estranged from her, her husband had acquired bad habits and preferred the society of his comrades to hers. For whose sake had she imposed the heavy burden upon herself? For whose sake

had she gone among strangers to earn all that she had brought home with her, and for whom had she kept herself so pure? She wet her pillow with bitter tears. But suddenly an inner voice said to her: "Do you mean to take credit to yourself for having been honest? Were you honest for yourself, or for others? and weren't they obliged to suffer, too, in taking everything upon themselves? Oughtn't you to thank God that they didn't die of grief?—Yes, that was all very well; but now they ought to be heartily glad and grateful—I can't expect it of the child, for that's too young to know; but my husband—he has sense enough when he feels like it. And have I gained all this only to be a hostess to the whole world? No, I've earned it, and I've a right— For God's sake! A right? There's the trouble. When the one always insists upon claiming his rights from the other, it's just like hell itself—I don't want any rights; I've got no rights; I want nothing at all. All I wish is to be an obedient wife and a good mother—Dear Lord, assist me if I'm not one."

Heavy steps were heard approaching. Hansei entered and, with cheerful voice, Walpurga exclaimed: "God greet you, Hansei! I'm glad that you've found me still awake."

"I've won the bet! I've won it!" exclaimed Hansei with a loud voice. "There's two men standing out there under the window. We had a wager together and I've won six measures of wine from them. They said that the best proof of a wife is the way she receives her husband when he returns from the tavern, or when he awakes her out of her sleep. I told them: 'I know my wife. When I get home, she'll be kind and friendly to me.' But they wouldn't believe a word of it. And so we've had a wager, and I've won it; and if all the wine in the whole world were mine, it wouldn't please me half so much as to know that I was right."

Hansei opened the shutters of the window toward the lake, and called out: "Now you've heard it, friends. You can go now; I've won the wine. Good night!"

Walpurga pulled the cover over her head. There was

laughter outside, and the two men departed. For a minute or two, the bright moonlight shone into the lowly cottage, and then the shutter was closed again.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Hansei awoke the next morning, the cows were already milked, and the house looked so bright and clean that it seemed as if one of the kind fairies that dwelt on the mountains had been putting things to rights. A pot of blooming, scarlet pinks stood in the center of the table, over which a neat, white cloth had been spread; and, as if to hide the dingy flower-pot from view, a garland of leaves had been twined around it.

"You've been industrious," said Hansei, and Walpurga answered: "Yes, my thoughts wandered far away into the world, and have come back again. You see, the quality have all that one can wish for, but do you know what they haven't got?"

"No."

"They've no Sunday; and do you know why?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Because they've no real workdays. In the palace, when you get up in the morning, your boots and shoes are ready at your door just as if they had blackened themselves. The coffee is ready of itself, the bread has baked itself, the paths have swept themselves clean, and everything is attended to, one hardly knows how. But to do everything with your own hands—Just see! to-day, I've already put my hand under your feet; I've cleaned your shoes."

"You mustn't do that; that's no work for you. Don't you do it again."

"Very well, I won't do it again. But to-day I've done everything, and I can hardly tell you how happy I felt when I went after the first pail of water. It went hard at first, but I managed it, after all. And now I'm longing for breakfast. Since the day I left home, I've never once been so hungry as I now am."

When the grandmother came, bringing the child with

her, she, too, was surprised, and said: "Walpurga, you'll turn our cottage into a palace."

With joyful mien, Hansei told her of all that Walpurga had been doing, and the mother said: "She's right; an industrious home is the happiest home, and now, just because you've got some means, you must work so much the more. For where there's idleness riches take wings to themselves; but if you're always adding something, no matter how little, to your store, the old is likely to stay."

"I don't think we need go to church to-day," said Hansei, "mother's giving us the best benediction."

"Yes, but we'll go to church, for all that," replied Walpurga. "All the time I was away, I've looked forward to this first going to church. What a fine day it is! I don't believe there ever was such lovely weather." Their intercourse was full of happiness. The only drawback was that the child still refused to go to Walpurga.

Walpurga told her mother that everything had been well attended to during her absence, but she was displeased at one thing.

"What is it? what have I done?"

"Why, you didn't get yourself a servant."

The old woman smiled. She could never do that. She didn't know how she could ever order a servant about. And now Hansei said he wouldn't allow his wife to overwork herself, and that there must be a servant in the house.

The grandmother recommended one of her brother's children from over the mountains. So it was decided that they should send word to Uncle Peter to come, and bring one of his daughters with him.

The morning was clear and bracing, and Hansei, who had put on his snow-white shirt, said, while lighting his pipe:

"Walpurga, let your mother work a little while, and come out into the garden."

He was sitting on the bench under the cherry-tree. Walpurga soon joined him and, after the fashion of women, said that she could only remain for a short time, that she had various matters to attend to, and that they ought to be at church in good season.

She sat down beside him, and Hansei said: "Why don't you say something? you must have lots to tell about."

"I can't think of anything now. Just wait, it'll all come in time. It's happiness enough that we're together again. If we, all of us, only keep well. I think our cherry-tree has grown."

"And now that I think of it, you've had no cherries from it this year. I'll climb up and get some for you, and if I could get up, way beyond the tree, and bring down the blue sky for you, I'd do it."

He climbed up the tree, and cried out: "Shoo! you sparrows, you've had enough. My old woman's here again, but she's a young one, still, and wants some, too. You've had your wives with you the whole year, and I haven't." He hurriedly plucked the finest cherries, singing the while:

" In cherry time, you left me, dear ;
In cherry time, again you're here.
The cherries they are black and red,
And I'll love my darling till I'm dead."

Suddenly he called out: "Walpurga, I must come down, I can't get any more for you, I'm so giddy."

He was soon on the ground again and said: "That never happened to me before, in all my life, and I've been up there many a half-day at a time. I suppose it's our good fortune that makes me so giddy. I'll never climb a tree again, I promise you that. It would be a terrible thing if I were to fall down. We must take care that we keep well and hearty, and stick to each other. I don't want to break my legs. I want to dance with you yet. I'll dance with you at Burgei's wedding. It seems as if I could hear the music already. Hark! don't you hear anything?"

"No. It'll be a long while before the music for Burgei's wedding is struck up."

"And she must get a good husband; I won't have it otherwise. What do you think of a prince? but I'll be quiet, for I'm talking nothing but silly stuff. I scarcely know what I'm saying, where I am, or who I am, and—"

"We're at home, and you're my husband and that's all of it. You'll see, I have something else good in store for you."

"Tell me nothing, and promise me nothing more. I've got enough already. I can hardly believe that we've a child. It seems as if we were just married."

In a soft voice, too low for any passer-by to hear it and just loud enough for them to know they were singing, they sang:

"Oh, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee.
And swiftly speed the hours by,
When thou art near to me."

Just like the finch who never wearies of repeating his song, they sang the same words over and over again. They had nothing more to tell each other, for they were unspeakably happy. The church bell now began tolling. Its sounds, floating over the lake, were echoed back from the forests and mountains. A wagon was seen coming from the village and Walpurga said: "We must get ready for church."

They went into the house. The mother had already brought Hansei his royal Sunday suit. They soon heard the cracking of a whip and a voice cried out: "Are you coming?" Hansei put his head out of the window and asked: "What's the matter?" Covering herself with a large sheet, Walpurga looked out of the low window. The innkeeper's head-servant, who was standing by the wagon out in the road, answered:

"My master sends you his wagon, so that you may drive to church."

"Walpurga, do you wish to ride?" asked Hansei, at the closed chamber door.

"No, I'll walk. I beg of you, Hansei, send the wagon away; I've had enough riding." Hansei went out. At the same moment the innkeeper, with his military medal glittering on his breast, arrived.

Hansei thanked him, but said that his wife didn't care to ride. But it was not so easy to deny the innkeeper, who waited until Walpurga came out of the house.

She was not long dressing herself, and that is saying a

great deal; for this was to be her first appearance at church and she knew that all eyes would be directed upon her. When she came out, clad in tasteful attire, the innkeeper said:

"You must do me the honor of letting me drive you and your husband to church."

"I'm still quite sound on my feet, and shall be glad to have a good walk again."

"You can do that, too; but not on the first Sunday. We'd feel ashamed before the folks who live in the wilderness and out at the Windenreuthe, if we didn't show them that we know how to treat a woman like yourself with proper respect. We're all proud of you."

"Thanks. Don't think hard of it, but I won't ride."

Walpurga was not to be moved. The innkeeper was about to give vent to his anger, but, fearing the consequences, he restrained himself, and, with smiling mien, said:

"I ought to have known as much. Walking's a great treat to the quality. Yes, indeed!" He laughed at his own cleverness and sent the wagon home again. He kept smiling till he had a chance to turn his back on Hansei and Walpurga, when his face assumed quite an angry expression. He went home, took off his coat with the medal, hung it up in the closet, and wished he could hang himself in the same manner. Who could tell but what Walpurga would interfere both with all his fun and the handsome receipts he expected that day.

Walpurga and Hansei started off by the road along the lake, the grandmother, with the child on her arm, standing at the garden hedge and looking after them. She softly repeated to the child: "mother," and it suddenly called out "mother" in a loud voice. Walpurga turned round and wanted to hug the child, but it again tried to hide from her, and cried when she attempted to kiss it. Hansei stood by, and was so vexed that he raised his hand as if to strike the child, but Walpurga pacified him and said: "We must wait."

The second bell was ringing, and they hurried on. On the way, they were joined by men, women and children coming from the village and various farms in the neigh-

borhood. Hansei longed to drive them away, and he once said, softly, "I'd like to go with you, alone."

"Be patient," said Walpurga, "don't begrudge them their delight in our happiness." She was affable to all. Hansei looked out over the lake, then up at the sky, and then again at his wife, as if to say: "She's here again." He smiled when he heard the children saying: "She's the grandest peasant now—she comes right after the queen."

The third bell, or the ringing in, which generally lasts a full quarter of an hour, had just begun, when Hansei and his wife reached the church. Many churchgoers were standing about in groups and welcomed them. There was still time to remain there, chatting for awhile; but Walpurga took her husband's hand and went into the church with him. They were the first to enter. Walpurga took her usual seat in the place allotted to the women, and Hansei went into that assigned to the men. Thus they were together and yet apart. The bells overhead were still ringing out their merry peal, while they sat there in silent introspection. Once only did Hansei nod to his wife, but she shook her head deprecatingly.

The playing of the organ began, and the people poured into church. Walpurga knew that such and such a one was near her, but she did not wish to be welcomed or greeted by any one in such a place. She felt that the eye of the Invisible One was resting upon her.

The pastor preached of the return to the everlasting home. It seemed as if his words were intended for Hansei and Walpurga; as if he were speaking only to them.

When the sermon was over and prayers were offered for the king, the queen and the royal family, there was strange whispering in the church. Walpurga felt that all eyes were directed upon her, and did not look up.

The service was over. The congregation left the church, and Walpurga was now welcomed by the late-comers.

The sexton came to Walpurga and Hansei, and said that the pastor wished to see them in the vestry. They went in. The pastor again welcomed them, spoke of their good fortune, and admonished them to be humble.

"Yes, yes," said Hansei, "my mother-in-law said almost the same thing."

The pastor promised to visit them before long, and said that he was proud to have such a woman among his parishioners. Hansei put out his hand as if to check him, and felt like answering: "What's the use of your warning us against pride when you tell us such things yourself?" The pastor motioned him to be quiet, and went on to say: "I shall visit the capital next week, and you must do me the favor, Walpurga, to give me a letter to Countess von Wildenort."

"With all my heart," said Walpurga.

When they were out of doors again, Hansei looked at his wife from head to foot. And so even the pastor would ask his wife to intercede for him. Yes, she was a splendid wife, if all that couldn't turn her head.

"Oh Hansei," said Walpurga suddenly, "what a pack of fools they all are. They do all they can to make one proud, and if one were to become so, they'd do nothing but abuse you."

Hansei was on the point of saying that he had thought the very same thing, but, before he had a chance to do so, he saw Schneck the tailor coming down the mountain-side, and carrying his great bass viol. The weak and delicate-looking man, with the great instrument on his back, presented quite an odd appearance.

"Heigho! why here's the wedding party," exclaimed the tailor, while he left the meadow path and ran up the road to shake hands with Hansei and Walpurga.

"What's the matter? what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to play for you to-day."

"For us? Who ordered you?"

"What a pity my wife didn't live to see this day. How happy it would have made her. Don't you know about it? There's going to be a great feast at the Chamois, in honor of your return, Walpurga, and the innkeeper has engaged me and six other musicians. The forest keeper, the chief forester, all the judges of the court, and everybody for six leagues around, have been invited. How stupid that I've only got my bass viol with me, or else I'd play you a piece, right here on the road."

"There you have it," whispered Walpurga to her husband, "the innkeeper makes money out of everything. If he only could do it, he'd have fiddle-strings stretched over my back, and have the skin drawn off of you to make drum-heads with."

"Go on; we'll follow," said Hansei to the tailor. He was annoyed when others joined them on their way home. He wanted to be alone with his wife. No one should have a share of her; she belonged to him alone.

"It'll soon be a year since we sat on this pile of stones. Do you remember? It must have been somewhat about here," exclaimed Hansei, with joyous voice.

Walpurga gave an evasive answer. She told Hansei that she thought it a stupid piece of business for the innkeeper to make a festival of her return, but that she wouldn't put foot in the Chamois for all his music.

Hansei had not thought so ill of the projected entertainment; on the contrary, he had found pleasure in the idea of sitting in the midst of the crowd, with his wife by his side and all the people frisking about him. That was more than Grubersepp, with all his money, could get. It was not without a struggle, that he, at last, said: "Just as you please; you ought to know best whether it's proper for you."

As soon as the afternoon service was over, crowds, on their way to the Chamois, were seen hurrying through the village in carriages, on horseback, or afoot. The sound of the music could be heard from afar, and the tones of tailor Schneck's bass viol were heard over all.

"If I could only hide myself from them," said Walpurga.

"That's easily done," said Hansei, triumphantly, "that's all right. Let us go off together, by ourselves."

He went out through the back door and into the back garden and loosened the boat from the spile. While the chain rattled over its side, Walpurga laid her hand on her heart and said:

"You've loosened a chain from my heart."

They got into the boat and pushed off, and, like an arrow, the slender bark shot out over the smooth water of the lake.

"The pastor meant to come," said Walpurga, when they had gone some distance.

"He can come some other time; he won't run away," thought Hansei. "We're rowing together, just as we did when we were betrothed."

Walpurga also seized the oars. She and Hansei sat face to face. The four oars rose and fell as if it were a single hand that plied them. Neither spoke a word; there was nothing to be said. The happy glances they bestowed on each other were full of eloquence, and the equal stroke of the oars told the whole story.

When they reached the middle of the lake, they heard loud music from the shore, and, looking back, saw a great crowd, accompanied by the band, in front of their house.

"Thank God! We've escaped that," said Hansei.

They rowed on, further and further, and went ashore on the opposite bank where, holding each other by the hand, they walked up the hill. They soon reached a bluff, where they rested for awhile. At last, Hansei said:

"Walpurga, it seems to me that you don't want to be the landlady of the Chamois. Tell me frankly, is it so?"

"No, I don't; but if you're really bent upon it—"

"I want nothing that doesn't suit you."

"Nor do I want anything that displeases you."

"And so we'll let the innkeeper go his own way?"

"Gladly."

"We can wait."

"We can remain as we are, for the present."

"We'll soon find a good chance."

"The money won't grow moldy."

"Nor will you. I've got a bran-new wife. Hurrah! hurrah!"

Their voices joined in merry song, and they felt as if relieved from a self-imposed burden.

"They may make sport of me, as much as they please, as long as we're happy together," said Hansei.

"Hansei, I'll never forget you for that. There's something else coming, too."

"There needn't be anything more. All I ask for is that we may keep what we have."

They sat there for a long while, and at last Walpurga said:

"Oh! how beautiful the world is. If we could only always remain together thus. There's nothing more beautiful than to sit here and look at the lake, through the green leaves and the gray boughs. There are two skies, one above and one below. Hansei, we have two heavens, too, and I almost think that the one on earth is the lovelier of the two."

"Yes, but joy has made me hungry and thirsty; I must have something to eat."

They descended to a quiet, desolate-looking village that lay near by. Here and there people were seated before their doors, chatting and yawning, to while away the sultry hour of noon. But Walpurga said:

"Oh, Hansei, how beautiful everything is! Just look at that wheelbarrow, and that pile of wood, and that house—I don't know what's the matter with me, but I feel quite dizzy, and as if everything were smiling at me."

"You must have something to eat and drink; you're quite beside yourself."

They found the inn-parlor untenanted except by myriads of flies.

"They've got lots of guests here, but they don't pay anything," said Hansei, and they both laughed with all their might. They were so happy that the merest trifle provoked them to laughter.

After repeated calls the landlady appeared, bringing some sour wine and stale bread; but it was quite palatable, nevertheless.

They left and, when evening came on, rowed about the lake for a long while. The evening dew was already falling, when Hansei, pointing toward a distant bare spot in the forest, said: "That's our meadow."

Walpurga seemed busied with other thoughts. She rested her oars and exclaimed:

"The little house over there is our home, and there's our child. I don't know how it is—" She could not express her feelings, but it seemed as if she must fly away and hover over the sea and the mountains, with all that

belonged to her. She gazed earnestly at Hansei, until he at last said:

“Of course it’s our little house; and our cows, and our tables, and our chairs, and our beds, are all there. Walpurga, you’ve become a foolish thing; everything seems strange to you.”

“You’re right, Hansei. Only have patience with me. I’m just coming home to it all again.”

She had, at first, almost felt mortified at Hansei’s words. He had taken her expressions so literally, and had not appreciated her high-strung feelings. But she quickly regained her self-control, and realized how changed she had become, and that all this was out of place here.

They returned home, and slipped into the house through the back door. They found everything quiet and in good order. They did not care for the people outside, or for their merry-making. They were enough to each other.

CHAPTER VI.

WERE these the same villagers who had talked so scandalously of Walpurga when, at Christmas time, the new clothes had come for Hansei and the mother? Had they suddenly become kind and loving?

It seemed, at first, as if they had really raised themselves to the noblest height, that of pure sympathy.

But now— If there had been a weathercock to mark the feelings of men, it would have turned quite suddenly.

It all came about quite naturally.

There were few amusements still left to the villagers. The church and state authorities had ruled with a severe hand. It was, therefore, no trifle that the members of the provincial court would permit music in midsummer, in honor of the prince’s nurse, for the sanction of the authorities was required, even for music.

All were delighted except, of course, Grubersepp, who made a wry face at their noisy doings, and, after he had taken his comfortable afternoon nap, went out to his fields. Such a noise and fuss about nothing at all, would do very well for the little farmers, the woodcutters, the boatmen

and the fishermen ; but it should not interest a rich, sober-minded farmer.

But when they found that Walpurga and Hansei had gone away, and that the cream of the joke was thus spoiled ; when even the country justice said that their behavior was shameful, there was quite a revulsion of sentiment, and many who had gone to the cottage by the lake in order to do honor to its inmates, now began to think of what tricks they might play Hansei and his haughty wife. There were many ways of annoying them, such as cutting off the cows' tails, nailing up the doors, breaking the windows—they were quite ingenious in inventing all sorts of mean tricks, but the presence of the justice acted as an uncomfortable restraint. So the crowd returned to the inn and amused themselves by inveighing against the he-nurse and his stupid wife. By degrees, however, another change in feeling took place. There are many who rejoice in another's misfortunes, and they chuckled over the landlord's disappointment. The feast, and the great earnings he had expected, had both been failures, for the better portion of the company soon drove off, leaving him enough roast meats and cakes on hand to last a week. Out in the kitchen, the hostess was weeping with anger and vexation, which she would gladly have vented upon her husband. There was lively talking on all sides, and they found it a great joke to make sport of the innkeeper, and to advise him to add the day's loss to the price of the house.

"I shan't sell at all," said the host. "Such people shan't enter my house again."

When Walpurga awoke, early on Monday morning, Hansei was nowhere to be seen. The week's work had begun. Before daylight, he had taken his scythe and gone out to his mountain meadow, where he was now mowing the dewy grass. He worked with such joy, such pleasure and calmness, that it seemed as if an invisible power were guiding his hand. When the breakfast was ready and Walpurga had searched for her husband everywhere, and thinking that he might have gone fishing, had called out for him back of the house and down by the lake, she went out into the garden again and looked up

into the cherry-tree. Perhaps he was up there, although this constant plucking of cherries would be too much of a good thing. At the same moment, she looked toward the hill, and saw Hansei coming home, his scythe glittering in the sun. Walpurga beckoned to him. He quickened his pace and told her how much he had already done. "Ah!" said he, stretching his limbs while he seated himself at the breakfast-table, "it does one good to work before breakfast, and then come home and find wife and child and mother, with something warm and good to eat, waiting for you—Ah! that tastes good. Sunday's beautiful, but a workday's much finer. I wouldn't care to be one of your quality, who have Sunday all the year round. If I only had lots of fields and meadows and forests, so that I could always work on my own land."

"We'll have them, God willing," answered Walpurga.

They were a happy party at breakfast, and the child was full of life. They had been sitting together for a little while, when the innkeeper's servant entered and brought Hansei his beer-mug with his name engraved on the pewter lid, and signified that the innkeeper desired no further visits on his part.

Hansei sent word to the host that he had better return the two hundred florins that he still owed him. He did not like to send such a message by the servant, but he felt that he ought to give him tit for tat.

"And tell him, besides," he called out to the servant, "he's often been warned that he might get hold of the wrong fellow. Just tell him that I'm the wrong fellow."

Hansei could not help feeling sad while he looked at the empty beer-mug. Who knew how long it would remain empty. Perhaps forever. And it's no trifling matter to be excluded from the village inn. It's almost as hard as to live in a small capital where the prince gives entertainments, and to be unable to take part in them because you are not admitted at court. "There's a new tap," they'd say; "there's a new wipe purchase; there are entertaining strangers there—" He was now excluded from the best thing there was in the village. When he looked at his tankard it was with sad thoughts, and with

a prophetic sense of the thirst which in future he would be unable to quench.

Before long, woodcutters, on their way to the forest, stopped to see Hansei and tell him of all that had been said of him and his wife on the previous day. They roundly abused those who, in order to please the innkeeper, had spoken ill of an honest man, one against whom nothing could be said.

"There's no harm done," replied Hansei; "on the contrary, it makes one wiser to see how people will talk when their tongues are loosened."

"And your comrades, the huntsmen, said they had only let you go with them in order to have fun at your expense."

"That doesn't matter. I'll soon show them that I've learnt wisdom from them."

"Wasn't there one who spoke well of us?" inquired Walpurga.

"Yes, yes," replied Wastl the weaver, who felt kindly inclined toward Hansei, but feared to incur the displeasure of the innkeeper—"the doctor. He's a real friend of yours. He said: 'Walpurga was perfectly right; it's the most sensible thing she's ever done'—and he also said that he and his wife would soon come on purpose to welcome you."

And now the woodcutters cautioned Hansei, and told him that there were others who thought just as they did, that the old inn had been of little account for a great while, and that he would do well to apply for a license. He couldn't fail to get one, and then he could run the host of the Chamois so dry that the hoops would fall from his casks.

Hansei nodded his cheerful approval. "Just wait, we'll show you, yet," he muttered to himself, clenching his fists, stretching out his arms, and raising his shoulders as if he would fell the innkeeper to the earth with a blow that would make him forget to rise again. But Walpurga said: "We'll harm no one, and we'll let no one harm us."

"Haven't you something to drink?" inquired the wood-

cutters. They wanted a reward for the news they had brought.

"No, I've nothing," replied Hansei. "I must be off to the meadow to turn the hay."

The men left, and had gone a great ways before they ceased abusing Hansei. "That's the way with a beggar on horseback. He won't even give you a drink when you bring him news."

Wastl the weaver had not the courage to contradict them, although he knew that Hansei would gladly have given him something to drink if the rest of the company had not been present.

Hansei gazed at his forlorn tankard for some time. At last he said:

"I don't care. I wanted to be all alone with you, Walpurga, and now we are alone, I ask nothing of the world."

"The innkeeper's not the whole world," said Walpurga, consolingly.

Hansei shook his head, as if to say that a woman can't understand what it is to be shut out of the inn, just like a drunkard whom the law prevents from going there.

"He's got no right to keep me out," said he, angrily. "I know my rights. The landlord must give drink to every guest who enters his house. But I shan't do him the honor to go there."

Walpurga, whose thoughts followed the woodcutters, conjectured they were speaking ill of them.

"We ought to have given the woodcutters something to drink. They're surely abusing us now."

"We can't stop every one's mouth," replied Hansei. "Let them talk; and don't begin to repent now. We must be firm. What's done is done." With a changed tone he added:

"The sun's burning hot on the mountain, and if we stick at our work, we can get our hay in this very evening. In such weather as this, the grass turns into hay as fast as it falls from the scythe. But there's something brewing in the lake. There may be a storm before we know it; and so I'd like to get the hay in under cover. Won't you go along?"

Walpurga was delighted to go. The mother also

wished to accompany them, and so, taking their dinner with them, the whole family set out for the mountain meadow. Hansei carried the child, Walpurga took the barrow, and the grandmother carried the dinner basket. As soon as the dog saw them start, he followed after them, and was constantly running backward and forward, from one to the other of the party. The dew had already disappeared from field and meadow, when they entered the shady forest.

"I'd rather push a barrow," said Walpurga, "than ride in a coach."

When they began to ascend the hill, they changed about. The grandmother took the child, Walpurga the dinner, and Hansei the wheelbarrow. It was not until the child was asleep that Walpurga could take it on her arm, and she felt happy while carrying it through the green wood. Once, it opened its eyes and looked at her, but soon closed them again and went to sleep.

When they reached the meadow, they laid the child in a shady spot, where they could always have it in sight, and the dog remained there guarding it. Hansei and the two women worked assiduously. Hansei called out to Walpurga that she must not turn the hay so quickly, or she would soon tire herself, for she was no longer used to such work. So she went about it more slowly.

"This meadow was bought with your money," said Hansei.

"Don't say that. Promise me you'll never say such a thing again."

"I promise."

They found it warm work, and when Hansei came near Walpurga again, she said:

"The same sun that dries the grass makes us wet with perspiration. At the summer palace, they mow the grass every week. They never let it grow high, and take great care that there are no flowers in the grass; but they tell me that it doesn't make good fodder."

"You think of so many things," replied Hansei. "Aren't you tired yet?"

"Oh no; I've been resting so long. Do you know what pleases me most of all? Just look," said she.

showing him that her hands were becoming hardened by labor.

They heard the bell down in the valley striking the hour of eleven. This was the signal to prepare dinner. Hansei hurriedly brought some wood, a bright fire was kindled, and the child was so lively that the grandmother had to exert all her strength to keep it on her lap. While the soup was being warmed, Hansei sat by smoking his pipe. The three sat on the ground eating out of one dish. After dinner, Hansei stretched himself out and said: "I'll sleep for a quarter of an hour."

Walpurga also lay down, but the mother remained awake, watching the child.

Hansei slept but a short time. He looked pleased when he saw his wife lying on the ground, sleeping by his side. He motioned to the mother that she should not awaken Walpurga. The child was placed in the basket beside its mother, who slept on quietly, while Hansei and the grandmother were at work further down the hillside. The sun was already sinking when Walpurga awoke. She felt something touching her which thrilled her strangely. She opened her eyes, and they met those of her child. Its hands were stroking her cheeks. The child had crept out of its basket and had crawled up to her. Walpurga kept perfectly still. She scarcely ventured to breathe, and closed her eyes, lest she should frighten the child away. "Mother," cried the child. She still restrained herself, though she felt as if her heart must burst. "Mother! Mother!" it cried, more eagerly than before; and now she raised herself and embraced the child, and it let her do with it as she liked. Her heart overflowing with happiness, she sank on her knees and held her little, laughing child on high.

She sprang to her feet, held the child up with both her hands, and, hurrying to her people, exclaimed: "Hansei! mother! the child's mine!" and the little one held her tightly in its arms.

"Moderate yourself!" said her mother. "You'll spoil the child if you show that you care for it so much. That's enough, Burgei," said she to the little one. "Put it down, Walpurga, and come help us."

Walpurga followed her mother's advice, but could not help looking toward the child. It did not turn toward her. It was playing with the dog, who had made good friends with it. Presently it tumbled down from the pile of hay. Walpurga shrieked; but the mother exclaimed, "let it alone!" The child lifted its head, laughed, crawled over to the grandmother, and then looked over at its mother.

The hay was dry. Hansei hurried off to fetch his cow team, as he was anxious to get the load home betimes. The wagon could not come nearer than the road, and so they were obliged to carry the hay down the hill and to pile it up in heaps. Walpurga said that she had slept enough and had been idle for a long while, and allowed her mother to help her but little.

Hansei returned. They loaded the wagon. Grandmother, Walpurga and child sat on top of the load of hay, and Hansei, at last, got up, too. Evening had set in. The lake began to assume a darker hue, and it was only here and there that a streak of light played upon its surface.

"And now the people may say whatever they please," said Walpurga, "here, we're far above them all."

The mother and Hansei looked at each other, and their glance meant: "How wonderful it is that Walpurga should have such strange thoughts about everything."

It was soon quiet in the little cottage by the lake. Its tired but happy inmates were sleeping, and the whole house was fragrant with the odor of the new-mown hay.

CHAPTER VII.

THE folks in the cottage slept on peacefully, knowing nothing of the whirlwind of dust, the dark clouds that overcast the sky, the mighty storm, or the violent rain that followed. When Hansei put his head out of the window next morning, it was still raining. He turned to Walpurga and said: "Do you see? I was right, yesterday. The weather's changed. Thank God! our hay's under cover."

"Yes," replied Walpurga. "What a day it was. It was all sunshine."

It rained all day. A sharp wind was blowing, the waves of the lake rose on high and lashed themselves against the shore.

"How good it is to have a roof over one's head," said Walpurga. Hansei again looked at his wife with surprise. Walpurga discovered everything anew. But now she was happy, for her child clung to her. It called her "mother," and called the grandmother "mamma."

Walpurga, with the child on her arm, was standing at the stable door and throwing bread-crumbs to the finches, who could find no food that day. The birds picked up the crumbs and flew away to their nests with them.

"They've got young ones at home, too," said she. Suddenly, she interrupted herself and said: "Burgei, we've been in the sun together, now we'll go into the rain together." She ran out into the warm rain with her child and then back again into the stable. She dried herself and the child and said: "There! wasn't it lovely? and now it's raining on our meadow and fresh grass will grow, and my child must grow too, and when we gather the aftermath, you'll be able to run alone."

Walpurga felt so happy that the child had become attached to her that she hardly knew what to do for joy. The child, too, was happier than it had ever been before. The young mother could play with it far better than the grandmother could. Her laugh was so bright, and she would count its little fingers and renew all those wondrous, childish plays which overflowing maternal love invented.

Walpurga did not care to eat anything all that day. She merely tasted a spoonful of the broth before giving it to her child. It rained incessantly. Hansei was out in the shed, chopping wood. Suddenly, he came into the room and said: "How careless we were yesterday. They all know that you brought home so much money with you, and we went off and left the house alone. Have you looked to see if it's still here?"

Walpurga was filled with alarm, but speedily satisfied herself that all was still there.

"It must be put in a safe place before long. At all events, one of us must always stay at home, now," said Hansei, and returned to his work.

Time passes slowly on rainy days, and what better employment is there in such seasons than to sit together and abuse those who are absent? At noon, Hansei said: "The Chamois must be crowded, all day long." It worried him to think that he could not be there. What a merry time he might have had. They might have drunk those six measures of wine, and now he must let the rogues get off without paying their wager.

Walpurga added: "Yes, and, from what I know of the people, I'm quite sure they're abusing us, because, thank God, we're doing well. It seems as if I'd never known people before, except by their outsides; but now I can see through them."

"Didn't you say that you wouldn't care what people thought?" replied Hansei.

Walpurga had a wonderful knack of divining the ideas of others. Her thoughts now penetrated every house, wandered to the pump by the courthouse, and into the inn itself, in order to discover what the people there were saying against her and hers. She was not obliged to wait long for confirmation. The joiner who, on the day of Walpurga's departure, had offered to sell his house and farm, now came to borrow money from Hansei, as he had received notice to pay off his mortgage. As an introduction, he thought it best to assure Hansei that he was his only friend, and the only well-wisher left him in the village.

Hansei plainly told him that he wouldn't lend money to any one, for that changed one's friends into foes. The friendly tale-bearer soon took his leave.

Living in the village had ceased to be a pleasure to them. The closing of the inn doors against Hansei was only the beginning. No one, of his own accord, bade him or his wife "good-day," and their greetings were scarcely returned. Walpurga, who had grown accustomed to being praised and esteemed by those about her, was often very sad. What vexed her most of all was that the story of the wager had been passed from mouth to

mouth, and had become so distorted that it was scarcely fit to be repeated. It seemed as if the privacy of the marital chamber had been revealed to the world and discussed in the market-place. She felt insecure in her own house. Every noise frightened her, though it were merely a barking dog, or the elder-bush brushing against the roof. Every night, before going to sleep, she would try the window-shutters, to see that they were firmly closed.

"I don't believe," said she, "that great folk are half so bad as villagers."

"Indeed!" said the mother. "I don't know anything about them; but from what I've heard, the quality are just as good and just as bad as the common folk. It don't depend on the clothes."

"You're just like Countess Brinkenstein. If you'd been obliged to spend all your life in the palace, you'd have been just like her," thought Walpurga to herself, while she looked at her mother.

Walpurga's mind was agitated by contending emotions. She was obliged to reconcile two distinct spheres of life; the court and the village, and, in imagination, would often transplant villagers to the court and *vice versa*.

She was sometimes quite bewildered, and scarcely able to distinguish what she had only imagined from what she had really experienced.

Hansei would listen to his wife and her mother discussing people and, with a smile, would think to himself:

"How changeable the women are; there's nothing consistent about them."

After Hansei had, for two or three evenings, resisted his inclination to go to the inn, he was merrier than ever.

"I'm glad," said he, "that I can give up a habit, if necessary. I really think I could give up smoking, too."

Those dull days served to show the difference between the dispositions of Hansei and his wife. To the superficial observer, Walpurga, so cheerful and wide-awake, would seem the superior of her sullen, awkward husband. Her temperament was suggestive of life among the mountains; for there, when it is dull and rainy, everything is covered with darkness, but, as soon as the sun breaks

forth, every object is lighted up afresh—the green meadows are brighter, the lake acquires a darker blue, very mountain height and every forest stream is revealed anew in clear and perfect lines. Like a beautiful flower, opening and revealing all its beauty in the glowing sunshine, Walpurga was always better and brighter in fair weather. Hansei remained steady and, indeed, gained in firmness while the bad weather lasted. When the storm raged, swaying branches and boughs to and fro, he resisted, as it were, and maintained his ground. He had something in common with the rough-barked, weather-beaten oak. The monarch of the forest does not don its robes of green with the first mild rays of the spring sun. Its boughs remain bare long after its neighbors are decked with foliage, but, in the end, it surpasses them all in strength and beauty.

The past year had indeed wrought a greater change in Hansei than in Walpurga.

The tree growing on a rock, drawing scanty nourishment from the thin crust of earth around it, and exposed to wind and storm, will, when transplanted to a rich soil, seem to languish at first; but it will soon shoot forth with new strength. Thus had it been with Hansei. The sudden transition, from a life of care and toil into a new sphere, had almost ruined him. But in a little while, all was well with him again. And now his firmness and self-possession stood him in good stead, for he was obliged to prevent Walpurga's kind but strongly self-conscious nature from gaining ascendancy over his.

Walpurga was, at first, almost vexed at her husband's insensibility. She would go about in an angry mood, would curl her lips and clench her fists. She felt as if she must do something to punish the villagers. Hansei remained calm; it was not his habit to trouble his head with much thinking. It gradually dawned upon Walpurga's mind that Hansei was far stronger than she. Like a plant deprived of sunshine, and in spite of her happy home, she would have withered and languished because of the averted glances of her neighbors. She was so possessed by her anger that she was only sensible to that which, feeding it, provoked her the more. Hansei was

quite calm, and Walpurga, for the first time, became fully aware of his strength of character. No one could make him change his gait. He was like a horse which jogs on, regardless of the dog barking at its heels, or which, when going up hill, will suffer no one to urge it into a trot.

In true humility, Walpurga bowed to her husband. He might have been wittier, readier, and more sprightly, but none could be better nor steadier than he.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE village council were in session.

Hansei was summoned to the town hall. The messenger who came for him told him that there was to be a new assessment, and that higher taxes were to be levied upon him, now that he had come into property.

"You needn't tell everything to the last kreutzer," said he.

"I'll tell them them all. Thank God, I've got something to pay taxes for," replied Hansei.

Walpurga listened with eager interest. She had been boiling with rage for many days, and now the time had come when her anger could find vent in words. She said she would go along to the town hall where they were all assembled, and would, then and there, tell them what she thought of them. Hansei persuaded her that that wouldn't do, and now the messenger seemed the very man to serve her purpose. She burst forth in a torrent of abuse of the villagers, and asked the messenger to go to them and repeat every word he had heard. She threatened them with the house of correction and the king, as if both were at her service, besides mentioning other punishments which were quite new and of her own invention.

"Come along," said Hansei to the messenger. While on the way, he gave him some drink-money, and told him that his wife had not yet become used to things at home, and that, naturally enough, many a thing worried her. The messenger reassured Hansei by saying that, in an office like his, one was obliged to hear and see much which it was best to seem ignorant of afterward, and

that women were very queer. Their great delight was to unburden themselves; after that, they were all right again.

Hansei was detained at the town hall for a long time. The innkeeper, who was one of the councilmen, was seated at the table, and found great pleasure in trying to get him into a tight place. His office protected him as with a shield. He tried to provoke Hansei to insult him, so that he might put him in jail and thus, at one stroke, disgrace the haughty beggar and his wife. Hansei saw what was in the wind, and every one was astonished at the polite manner in which he expressed himself. He never addressed the innkeeper except as "Mr. Councilman." "He must have learned that from his wife, who got her education at the palace," whispered the councilmen to each other.

In spite of the pouring rain that lasted during the whole of the meeting, Walpurga waited and watched outside of the town hall. If there should be any trouble up there, thought she to herself, she would go up and tell them all what they were. She was insensible to the rain penetrating her clothes, for she was all aglow with excitement. At last she heard a noise on the stairs. Many were coming down, and she hurried home.

Hansei returned home, full of self-confidence. He had conquered himself, and the victory had been a greater one than if he had laid about him with cudgels. At home, he found everything in great confusion.

Walpurga, after walking about in the rain, had suddenly hurried home as if some one was after her, and had fainted as soon as she entered the room where her mother was sitting. She had recovered, but was still in a high fever, and her teeth were chattering. Once she opened her eyes, but quickly closed them again.

Hansei wanted to go for the doctor at once, but the mother advised him to stay at home and send a messenger in his stead. Before the doctor came, Walpurga was sitting up in bed and telling her own story.

Hansei informed her how he had killed the innkeeper with politeness. Walpurga's face suddenly lit up with joy, and she held out her hand to him, saying:

"You're—you're a splendid fellow," and then she wept until the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"That's right," said the grandmother to Hansei; "that'll clear her head. I was afraid it had gone to her head, but now it's all right. You can go now."

Hansei left the room. He stood at the window for a while, looking out at the rain. "If your wife were to die, or if she should live and be worse than dead. If she—" He did not dare to think of the word.

The mother came out into the room and said: "Thank God! she's sleeping. When this is well over, the danger's past. It was no trifle to leave the palace as she's done, where they all petted her and showed her great respect, and to come here among these coarse, spiteful people. She'd become filled with anger and hatred, and it had to come out some day. Thank God, it's out now. It's lucky for us that the people have shown themselves so mean. Take my word for it—with all her goodness, she would have found fault with everything in the house, and nothing would have suited her, if this hadn't come in the way."

The mother thus consoled Hansei, who nodded approval of her words.

Walpurga slept. Her cheeks were scarlet. Hansei, with the child in his arms, stood at his wife's bedside for a long time, looking at her.

The doctor did not come until the next morning. He found Walpurga lively, but very weak. He prescribed drastic remedies, and, in the course of a few days, she was quite restored. She now saw what danger she had been in, and how luckily she had escaped it.

It was not until then that she felt quite at home and perfectly happy.

Walpurga and her mother were down by the lake, washing clothes.

"Yes, it's our business to keep things clean," said Walpurga. "When I look up at the mountains, I see the rocks and forests which only men, with their chisels and axes, can shape into houses. Men's work is with whatever's strong and powerful. Even if others do flatter us, and we per-

suade ourselves that we're ever so great, we women are less than they are."

The mother smiled and said: "Oh child, your thoughts are far-fetched, but you're right, for all."

"My Hansei's a real steady man," continued Walpurga.

"That he is," answered the mother, with joyful mien. "He doesn't talk as much as others do, but when it comes to a pinch, he knows what he has to do and how to do it, and that's just the way your blessed father was. You're very lucky to find this out so soon after the birth of your first child. I didn't know it till after my third, or, indeed, till I'd lost all my children except yourself."

"Good-day to you all!" suddenly said a little needy-looking man.

"Why, it's Peter!" cried the grandmother; "you here already? That's good. And is this your daughter? What's her name?"

"Gundel."

"God greet you both," said the grandmother, who kept wetting and wiping her hand again and again, before offering it to her brother.

The little man's features expressed great surprise. It was long since any one had been so glad to see him; but, of course, he had come to a house that was overflowing with joy.

The grandmother took her brother by the hand, and led him toward the house. She felt sad when she looked at the poor little man, for his appearance betokened great poverty.

She forthwith gave her brother and her niece something to eat. When they had finished, she took Gundel out to the wash-tub by the lake.

"Just work there till dinner-time, and then you'll know where you belong." She went back to her brother and again bade him welcome. The little man complained that life went hard with him. The grandmother went into the other room with Walpurga, and asked her:

"How much money did you mean to give me for my journey home?"

"As much as you want."

"No.—Tell me how much."

"Would ten florins be enough?"

"More than enough. Give them to me at once."

Walpurga gave her a ten florin piece and said:

"Mother, I haven't given you a present since I came back."

She gave her mother several florins in addition to the ten which she had already handed her, and said: "Take this and give it away. I know that your greatest pleasure is in giving to others."

"Oh, my child! you know me well. Oh God! I can now give something to others; that's the best thing in the world. You see, I've never been able to do anything for the poor."

"Don't say that, mother; how often you've watched, day and night, by the sick."

"That's nothing; that's not money."

"It's far better than money."

"May be it is with God, but with men— Just think of it!—to be able to give money and money's worth to others! You make me ever so happy. I've had gifts, too, in my time. You don't know how it is, when the hands of the giver and the receiver touch. And some gifts are like hot bread in one's stomach. It stills your hunger, but it lies there like so much molten lead. But there are some good people whose gifts do one good. Grubersepp's father once came to me and gave me something, and so did Count Eberhard Wildenort, who lives on the other side of the Chamois hill."

"Why, that's the father of my countess," said Walpurga, interrupting her.

"Thank God! Then he'll live to be rewarded for it by his children. I never forget a name. Yes, I received presents from them both, and now they're again bestowing gifts through me. My child, I'll never forget you for this. To be able to give is heaven on earth. But while we stand here chattering, my poor brother's waiting out there like a poor soul at heaven's gate. Come along."

They went into the room. The mother put the ten florin piece into her brother's hand, and said:

"There, take it. I needn't go to my home now, for it

has come to me, and if I never get there again, it's enough for me that I've seen my brother once more. There, Peter; that was to have been the money for my journey."

"Tsch-st-st-st—" with these sounds, resembling the hissing of a pot on a fire, did the little pitchman receive the gift.

"What does that mean?" asked Walpurga and her mother, in one breath.

"Tsch-st-st-st," answered Peter.

"What's the matter with you? are you crazy?" asked the mother, whose face had suddenly assumed a serious expression.

"Tsch-st-st-st," replied the little pitchman again.

And now it was Walpurga's turn to become angry and to inquire: "What do you mean by such capers?"

"Oh, you piece of palace wisdom!" said Peter at last, "don't you know how it hisses when a drop falls on a hot stone, and, d'ye see? it's just the same with me and the money."

The mother told him that he was ungrateful, and that the people thought that Walpurga had now enough money to make every one rich. He ought to feel very happy, for he had never before had so much at any one time. But the little pitchman, without making further answer, continued to repeat the strange, hissing noise. Walpurga went out and soon returned with another ten florin piece, which she gave to the little pitchman, who then said:

"There! it's out now; I can pay all my debts and buy me a goat, besides," and, striking the pieces of money together, he sang:

"What's the best? aye, what's the best?
To be free from debt or care,
And have a little money to spare—
That's the best; aye, that's the best."

The mother was now quite happy again. She resolved to be prudent and economical in dispensing her gifts. In imagination, she already saw the people whose want she could now alleviate, and perhaps remove. The joyful glances of those who were to be gladdened by her bounty seemed reflected in her calm and happy face.

"Oh you women!" said the little pitchman, as if sermonizing, while he looked with sparkling eyes at his two pieces of money, "you women can't know what money is. I shall put small change for a florin in my pocket, and always keep it with me. Hurrah! what a jolly life I'll lead. What do you know of such things? You go by a public-house on Sunday, put your hand in your pocket and there's nothing there. But I'll go in and won't begrudge myself a treat, and wherever there's an inn, I can make myself at home. Wine and beer await me, and host, hostess, daughter and servant treat me kindly, and ask how it goes with me, where I've come from and where I'm going to; and when I leave, they go with me part of the way, and ask me to come again. And why do they do so? Just because I've got money in my pocket."

The old man shouted for joy. The grandmother cautioned him not to become dissipated, and Peter laughed until his face was nothing but wrinkles. He declared that he had made it all up, and that now he was less likely to go to the public-house than before. "When you've got money in your pocket," he said, "it's great fun to go and quench your thirst at the pump in front of the inn."

"My countess told me," said Walpurga, seating herself near her uncle, "that you knew her father."

"And what countess is it?"

"Wildenort."

"Of course I know him. He's a man; the right sort of a man; a German of the old sort; a gentleman, a real gentleman. He ought to be king, he—" Heavy footsteps were heard approaching. Hansei entered. Peter quickly put the money in his pocket and whispered: "I shan't say anything to Hansei about it."

"You needn't tell him; we'll do it, ourselves," replied Walpurga.

CHAPTER IX.

HANSEI did not stand on ceremony with his uncle. He had known him for a long while. They had often met up in the mountains, where Hansei had worked as a woodsman and Peter had gathered pitch.

But they had not made much ado of their friendship; an occasional charge of tobacco had been the only exchange of courtesy between them.

Hansei now had something more important to relate.

"I was working out by the garden hedge that the band and the rest of the crowd almost tore down last Sunday, and, all at once, I heard some one say: 'You're quite industrious, Hansei'; and, when I looked round, who do you think it was? You can't guess."

"Not the innkeeper?"

"You'll never guess. It was Grubersepp, and he said: 'I hear you've stopped going to the Chamois,' and I said: 'That's nobody's business but my own.'"

"Why did you answer so rudely?" asked Walpurga, interrupting him.

"Because I know him. If you don't show your teeth to such a fellow, he'll hold you mighty cheap— 'See here,' said he. 'It'll be six years, come Michaelmas—ever since Waldl was born—and in all that time I've never once set foot in the Chamois, and I'm still alive for all. You'll find it'll do you good to stay away, just as it did me. I've laid in beer of my own, and if you ever feel like having a glass, send for it, or come yourself. Maybe you'll want a word of advice as to what you'd better do with your money, and let me tell you one thing, lend nothing to any one—' Now tell me, mother, tell me, wife, who'd have thought of such a thing? Who'd ever expect as much from old Grubersepp, who's always afraid he might waste a word? Now, Walpurga, you can see that the people aren't all wicked; good and bad are mixed together in the palace as well as in the village. When they find that Grubersepp keeps company with me, they'll come flocking back, just like bees to a mellow pear."

It was indeed a great event. A resident of the capital could not feel more highly favored if accosted by the king in the public street, than Hansei and his whole family now were.

Walpurga wanted to go up to Grubersepp's at once, and to acknowledge that she had done him wrong, but Hansei said:

"There's no need of being in such a hurry about it. I'll wait till he comes again; I won't go one step to meet him."

"You're right," replied Walpurga, "you're the right sort of a man."

"I've got my full growth," said he. "Isn't it so, uncle? I'm done growing."

"Yes," replied the uncle, "you've got your full size. But do you know what you ought to be? You ought to own a large farm. You'd be the very man, and Walpurga the very woman for it; and now that I think of it, have you heard that the owner of the freehold at our place wants to sell? They say he's obliged to. You ought to go there; you'd be better off than the king, then. If you've got the ready money, you can buy the farm at half-price."

The uncle now praised the farm, with its fields and its meadows, and said the soil was so rich and in such good condition that it was almost good enough to eat; and as to the timber, no one knew how much it was worth. The only trouble was that one couldn't get at it everywhere.

The uncle was a pitchburner, and knew the woods well.

Walpurga was quite happy, and said:

"It won't do to lose sight of this."

Hansei seemed quite indifferent about the matter. Walpurga took his hand in hers, and whispered: "I've something more for you."

"I don't need anything. There's only one thing I ask of you: let me attend to the purchase of the farm, and don't let uncle see that you snuff at it so. I really think the farmer must have sent him here. We must be hard, and make believe we don't care for it at all. I shan't neglect the matter, you may depend upon that. And, besides, I've been a woodcutter long enough to know something about timber land."

Hansei let the uncle go away alone and merely said, in a casual manner, that he would take a look at the farm some time or other.

Grubersepp came that evening, according to promise. A maid-servant, carrying a large stone jug of beer, followed him. A wealthy farmer visiting the cottage by the lake,

and bringing his beer there of an evening—such a thing had never been heard of as long as the village existed.

His whole manner seemed to say: "I've got sixty cows pasturing on the mountain meadows." No one had ever heard a word of praise pass his lips. He was a sour-visaged fellow, and was chary of his words. He was what is called a drudging farmer. All that he cared for was incessant work, and he never concerned himself about others.

Walpurga kept out of sight. She was afraid lest she might humble herself too much, and thus vex Hansei, who behaved as if Grubersepp had been visiting the family for years.

Grubersepp inquired for Walpurga. Hansei called her, and when she came, the rich farmer shook hands with her and bade her welcome.

After Walpurga had left the room, they spoke of the best way of investing the money.

Grubersepp was a great enemy of the public funds.

"Yes," said Hansei, at last. "I've had an offer of the farm on the other side of the lake, six leagues inland. My mother-in-law is from that neighborhood."

"I know the farm. I was there once. I was to have married the farmer's daughter, but nothing came of it. They tell me that the property is in a poor condition. If you want to reap good from land, you must give it something in return. The soil requires it, and, if you should purchase, don't forget that a good portion of the meadow land had best be sold. My father always used to say that the meadows of a farm are like a cow's udder."

Hansei was astonished at the amount of wisdom which Grubersepp had inherited, and marveled at his carrying it all about with him and making so little ado of it.

Grubersepp added: "The matter will bear thinking over, at all events, and I'd be glad if some one from our village should get so fine a property."

"But you wouldn't let me have anything toward it?"

"No. I don't owe you anything. But if you can use me in any other way—"

"Well, how? Will you go bail for me?"

"No; that I won't either. But I understand the mat-

ter better than you do, and I'll give you a whole day of my time. I'll drive over there with you and value the whole property for you. I'm glad that you've concluded not to take the inn. The weather's clearing, and I'll have all my hay under cover by to-morrow noon. If you need me for a day, I'm at your service, and we'll tide over there. You know that when I say a thing it's so, for I'm Grubersepp."

"I accept it," said Hansei.

Radiant with joy, Walpurga stood at the garden hedge the next day, watching the wagon in which Hansei and Grubersepp were sitting. She was glad that so many people happened to be coming from work at about the time the two drove off together.

"Now let 'em burst with anger; the first man in the village is my Hansei's comrade."

It was no small matter for Grubersepp thus to give a whole day of his time, and in midsummer at that. He meant it kindly enough, but his main object was to show that the innkeeper and his pack could not make a man of one, while he, Grubersepp, could. He felt quite indifferent as to what people thought of him, but, nevertheless, it does one good to let them know who's the master, as long as it costs nothing to do so. When it costs nothing—that was the chief point in all that Grubersepp did.

The nearest route lay across the lake and straight up the mountain on the other side. But Grubersepp had an unconquerable aversion to the water, and so they drove round the lake and then up the mountain.

It was late on the following evening when Hansei and Grubersepp returned. Hansei reported that the farm was a fine one, and that it would be quite a fair purchase, although not so wonderfully cheap as the uncle had vaunted it to be. The place had been sadly neglected; but that wouldn't stand in the way, for he could put all that to rights again. Still, he wouldn't buy, because he'd be obliged to leave too much remaining on mortgage, and he'd rather own a smaller farm and be out of debt.

Then Walpurga said:

"Come, I've been wanting to tell you something for a

great while, and you'd never listen to me. I've something more for you."

She led Hansei down into the cellar and, with a mighty effort, removed the stone cabbage-tub, after which she dug up the earth with her hands, and displayed to the astonished eyes of Hansei the pillow-case filled with gold pieces.

"What's that?"

"Gold! Every bit of it."

"Good God! you're a witch; that's—that's enchanted gold!" exclaimed Hansei. He was so startled that he upset the oil lamp which Walpurga had placed on an inverted pail.

They both stood there in the dark, shuddering with fear.

"Are you still here?" cried Hansei, trembling.

"Of course I am. Don't be—don't be—so—so superstitious. Strike a light. Have you no matches about you?"

"Of course I have."

He drew them from his pocket, but let them all fall on the ground. Walpurga gathered them up. Several of them caught fire, but immediately went out again. The sudden flash of blue light seemed weird and dismal. At last they succeeded in lighting the lamp, and went upstairs into the room, where Walpurga lit a second lamp, lest the darkness might again frighten them. Hansei hurriedly removed the pillow-case, and the glittering gold met his eyes.

"Now tell me," said he, passing his hand over his face, "have you any more? Don't try that again."

Walpurga assured him that this was all. Hansei spread the gold out on the table, piled it up in little heaps, and counted it with his fingers. He always had a piece of chalk in his pocket, and he now took it out and reckoned up the money. When he had finished, he turned and said:

"Come here, Walpurga. Come, there's your first kiss as mistress of the freehold."

Hansei put the gold back into the pillow-case, and when he went to bed he placed it under his pillow, saying: "Oh, what a good pillow; one can sleep sweetly on it."

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Walpurga awoke the next morning, she found the sack of gold in bed beside her, but Hansei had disappeared.

“Where is he? What’s become of him?”

She dressed herself in a hurry, hunted for him, and went all over the house calling for him; but he was not there. She hurried over to Grubersepp’s, but they had seen nothing of him. She returned home, but Hansei had not yet arrived.

What could it be? If Hansei had done some harm to himself—If having so much money had turned his head—Oh, that terrible money! It had been lying in the earth, and there was now nothing wrong about it, for what has once been in the ground is purified.

She went out to the lake. It was still storming; its waves were high, and the sky was covered with dark gray clouds.

Maybe Hansei’s destroyed himself—maybe he’s floating in there.

She stood by the water’s edge and cried “Hansei” with all her might.

There was no answer. She returned to the house, and, as coherently as she could, told her mother of her grief. Her mother consoled her.

“Do be quiet. Hansei took his axe with him—the one that always hangs up there. I suppose he had something to do in the forest. He never shirks work. When he comes home don’t tell him how foolish you’ve been. The palace still clings to you. You worry too much about everything. Take my word for it, the world’s quiet and peaceful enough as long as we’re quiet and orderly. Hush! I hear him coming. He’s whistling.”

Hansei approached whistling, and bearing his axe on his shoulder.

Walpurga could not go forward to meet him. She felt so weak in her limbs that she was obliged to sit down.

“Good-morning, Mistress Freeholder!” cried Hansei

from afar. "Good-morning, Freeholder!" replied Walpurga. "Where have you been?"

"Out in the woods. I cut down a pine-tree, a splendid one that must have felt my strokes. It did me good. But, first of all, give me something to eat, for I'm hungry."

"He can still eat; thank God for that," thought Walpurga to herself, while she hurried to fetch the porridge. She sat down beside him, delighting in every spoonful which he took. She had much to tell and to ask about, but she didn't wish to disturb him while he was eating, and when the dish was half empty she held it up for him, so that he could fill his spoon.

"Now tell me," said she, when the dish was emptied, "why did you go out so early and steal away so?"

"Well, I'll tell you. When I awoke, I thought it was all a dream, and when, after that, I found the money, so much of it, I thought I'd go crazy. Hansei, the poor fellow who used to save for months at a time, and felt so happy when he could buy himself a shirt and a pair of shoes, had all at once become rich, and it seemed as if some one were turning me round and round and driving me crazy. Then I felt like waking you up, that we might consider what I'd better do with myself. But you sleep so soundly that I thought— Pshaw! is your wife to help you? Just you wait, Hansei; I'll show you—and so I got out and took my axe and went up the mountain. Day was just breaking. Although I was quite alone, I felt, all the time, as if there was a great crowd of people after me. Still I went on till I reached the pine. It was marked out to be felled long ago. I threw off my jacket and set to work, and when the chips began to fly, I felt better. Afterward, Wastl came up and helped me, but he kept saying, all the time: 'Hansei, you never worked as you do to-day'; and he spoke the truth. We felled the tree and it came down with a crash. That did me, good, and I felt better and better. We chopped off the branches and did three times as much as we generally do in the same time, and so, little by little, all the foolish notions and giddiness left my head. Now I'm here again and happy, and I'm with you, Walpurga, my old sweetheart.

I've been a woodcutter again, in downright earnest, and now I'm to become a farmer—that is, if all goes right."

And it all came to pass.

The mother had a wonderful way of disappearing when she knew that Hansei and Walpurga had anything to settle between themselves. One could almost have fancied that the cottage was provided with secret doors and subterranean passages, so suddenly would she vanish. She would reappear just as suddenly, and no one would know where she had been or how she had returned.

According to her wont, she had disappeared. Walpurga and Hansei searched through the house for her, but found her nowhere. When they returned to the room, she was there.

"Mother, we've good news for you," said Walpurga.

"I see what's best of all, already," she replied, and that is that your hearts are truly united. I don't care to know any more."

"No, mother, you must know this. Did you ever imagine that you might be mistress of the freehold at which you once were a servant?"

"No, never."

"But now it is so."

Walpurga and Hansei, relieving each other by turns, told her that they had enough money to pay the cash down for the farm, and that the purchase was as good as concluded, because Hansei had obtained the refusal of it for eight days.

Mother Beate could not utter a word in reply. She folded her hands, and her features assumed an expression of sadness.

"Mother, aren't you pleased at it?" asked Walpurga.

"Not pleased? You'll soon see. But I'm old, my child, and can't jump about, the way you do. Look at the mountains over there. As long as they've been standing there, no one has ever felt happier than I do. I don't know what the Lord means by giving me so much happiness on earth. He knows what He is doing and I accept it calmly and patiently. When you came home to us again, I thought my cup of happiness was full, but now I

see there's more coming. Well, let what will come, I'm going home again."

The mother was obliged to stop, but Hansei said:

"Yes, mother; you shall see something that you've never seen before in all your life." He went into the room, returned with the sack of gold, and opened it.

"Just look at that!" said he. "How it shines and sparkles. You can hold it all in two hands, and yet there's enough there to buy a farm, with house and fields and forests, and cattle and tools and everything."

"That's a great deal of money," said the mother. She laid her hand on the gold, while her lips moved silently.

"Put your hand into it," urged Hansei. "Oh, how good it feels to stir about in the gold that way."

The grandmother did not comply with his wish, but kept murmuring to herself.

The child in the next room cried, and Hansei called out:

"The freeholder's daughter's awake. Good morning, freeholder's daughter!" said he, while the two women went out to the child. Then he took up the bag of gold, shook it, and said:

"Just listen; you never heard such music before."

The grandmother lifted the child out of the bed and said: "Hansei, just do as I tell you, and put the gold in the warm crib of the innocent child. That'll bless it, and no matter whose hands the gold may have been in, that consecrates it and brings a blessing with it."

"Yes, mother; we can do that." Turning to Walpurga, he added: "Mother always has such pretty notions. You know it'll do the gold good in the warm nest. Yes," said he to the little child, "they've put lots of gold in your cradle. We'll take one piece and have a hole drilled through it, and you shall get it when you become confirmed. Only keep good."

"But now I must go over to Grubersepp's," said he, at last.

Walpurga was obliged to tell that she had already been looking for him there, that morning. She now realized how prone she was to give way to exaggerated fears, and determined to break herself of the habit.

The grandmother, Walpurga and the child were happy together at home, and the mother related that just three months before Walpurga was born, she had been at the farm for the last time, and that was to attend her brother's wedding.

"They can bury me up there," added she. "It's a pity I can't rest beside your father, for the lake never gave him up again. Oh if he'd only lived to see this!"

Our highest joys and our deepest sorrows are closely allied.

Grubersepp came back with Hansei, and was the first to congratulate Walpurga and the grandmother. He advised them, however, to say nothing of the matter until the purchase was legally consummated.

CHAPTER IX.

ON Sunday, Hansei, Walpurga, and the mother, went to church together. The child remained at home with Gundel. They walked along the shore of the lake in silence, thinking of how often they had gone that way in joy and in sorrow, and how they would feel when walking along another path and to another church.

The churchgoers whom they met on the way greeted them coldly, and the grandmother said:

"Don't let us take evil thoughts against others into church with us. We must leave them outside."

"But when one comes out again, they're there all the same, just like the dogs that wait at the church door," replied Walpurga sharply. The mother looked at her and she shook her head, while she said: "Take my word for it, the people are not nearly so bad as they make believe to be. They think it makes them look grander and more important, if they show that they can be angry and spiteful; but let that be as it may, if we can't make others good, we can make ourselves better."

"Give me the umbrella, mother—I can carry it better than you," said Hansei. This was his manner of expressing his assent.

The innkeeper drove by. Hansei saluted him, but the only answer he heard was the cracking of the whip.

"That's the way," said Hansei. "If he's angry, it's no reason why I should be."

The mother nodded her approval.

Although the service had both edified and satisfied them, it did not prevent Hansei from having a mighty appetite at dinner that day, and he said:

"I think the freeholder can eat more than ever, but I'll see to it that he works right bravely, too."

Hansei was quite merry, but he did not climb the cherry-tree again.

The doctor and his wife paid them a visit that afternoon. Walpurga showed the pretty gifts she had received, and Frau Hedwig was all admiration.

"I shall lay this beautiful dress aside for my child's wedding. You can't begin thinking of the outfit too soon."

The doctor had brought a good supply of bottle food. He placed the bottles on the table and said:

"Hansei, they tell me that you're doing dry penance, and as I'm a heretic, I'll pour out the wine for you."

He proceeded to do so most generously.

Walpurga brought one of the silver-sealed bottles of wine that Doctor Gunther had given her.

Doctor Kumpan knew how to open the bottles. He praised the wine, but bestowed still greater praise on Gunther.

"I think," said Walpurga, "that we ought to tell our honored guests what we have in view. They're honorable people and won't carry it further."

"You're right," said Hansei, and told them about the farm. The doctor and his wife congratulated them, and were only sorry that such good people were about to leave the neighborhood. Encouraged by the wine, Hansei asked:

"Doctor, might I—be so free—? You see, you're really the cause of our good fortune. Would you do us the honor to accept a present from us?"

"Let's hear what it is. How many thousand florins will you spend on me?"

Hansei was quite frightened; he had not meant to go that far.

"You're a merry gentleman; you're full of fun," said he, collecting his wits. "What I meant to say was—I've got three cords of wood out in the forest. I only finished cutting it last week, and I'd like to take it to your house."

"I'll do you the favor of accepting it. I see you're a real farmer already. You have an itching palm and money clings to it. Take care to remain so."

That Sunday had other honors in store for them, for when the afternoon service was over, the pastor called. He told them that he intended to leave for the capital on the following day, and reminded Walpurga of her promise to give him a letter to Countess Wildenort. Laughing heartily, Doctor Kumpan exclaimed:

"Ah! so her highness Countess Wildenort is your friend, and the pastor—"

"Doctor, I'd like to speak a word with you," said Walpurga, interrupting him. "Come, as quickly as you can."

She had learned one lesson at court: viz., that a firm yet polite manner enables one to check or avert many an ill-natured remark. There was a certain grandeur in her manner when she told the doctor that, in her house, she would allow no one to speak ill of Countess Irma, just as she would allow no one to say anything against the doctor. That would be just as false as what was said about the countess, who, while she was merry enough to be his comrade, was just as good as he was. Walpurga added that she hoped he would not grieve her by speaking ill of the countess.

The doctor looked at Walpurga in astonishment. When he came back into the room, he said to Hansei:

"You've got a great wife; one whose friendship is an honor to any one."

Walpurga went to her room and wrote:

"My Dearly Beloved Countess:

"I take this opportunity to write to you. Our pastor is going to the city, and has promised to be kind enough to take the letter with him and deliver it to you. I don't know what else he wishes to do, but rest assured that

whatever he wants is all right. He's very kind to me, and particularly so since I've come home again. And now I'd like to write you how things are going with me. I couldn't ask God to make them better. To have one's husband, mother, child, and one's daily work besides! We've already made our hay, but not make-believe, as it used to be with us on on the lawn at the summer palace. Don't you remember?

"Dear me! I say with *us*, and who knows whether any one at the palace still thinks of me?

"Yes, I am sure you do, my good countess; and my child, I mean the prince, and the queen and Mademoiselle Kramer and her father too.

"Pray give my love to them all, the doctor and Baron Schoning and Countess Brinkenstein. She's good, too, and Madame Gunther, also, if you should meet her. Oh, what a woman she is! I'm sorry enough that I only made her acquaintance the day before I left. You ought to go to see her every day. Your blessed mother must have been just such a woman as she is; and do me the favor and write me how my prince is getting on. He's fond of you, too, and if you get married, let me know, and, if there's an opportunity, Mademoiselle Kramer might send me the beautiful distaff. It would be a great pity if it had to lie up there in the garret.

"My husband was very sorry that he didn't get to see you, and I was sorry, too. I must always try to forget how you looked that morning, and when I try to picture my beautiful countess and good friend to myself, I have to pass over that.

"My mother sends her respects; she remembers your mother and says that when one looked into her face it was like looking at the sun.

"My child was quite stubborn at first. You saw, by the prince, how stubborn children can be when they don't like a person; but my child and I are very good friends, and the best thing in the world, after all, is to have a child, something to do, and a little property besides. Ah! to walk about with one's child is to have a fountain of life with you; one from which you can drink pure happiness at any moment.

"It often seems like a dream, when I think that I've been away; and it's well that it's past. I feel that I couldn't go through it again, and all that I wish for now is to live happy.

"I kiss this sheet, for your hands will touch it.

"From your true friend,

"WALPURGA ANDERMATTEN.

"Postscript.—I've got some new songs here, but they're not pretty. I've no time to sing during the day, and if I didn't sing my child to sleep of an evening, I'd never have a chance to sing at all.

"Excuse me for writing so badly, but my hands have become hard already, and the paper and ink are very bad. Yes, that's what all bad writers say. Once more, farewell! I'm writing in haste and the pastor's waiting in the other room, and the doctor and his wife are here too. They're mighty good people, and if there are many wicked and envious folks in the world, they harm themselves more than they do others. My dear Countess, you can't imagine how much good you've done us. You'll be rewarded for it—you, your children, and your grandchildren. It's as good as certain that we won't stay here; but there's the same sky everywhere. And when you see your father, give him my mother's respects. She hasn't forgotten his kindness to her, and you are his daughter, and have your good heart from him and your mother. All that I wish is that you still had such a mother as mine. But mother's right: she says that there's no use wishing for what you can't have. I feel as if I had to write you a great deal more, but I can't think of anything else, and they're calling for me from the other room. Farewell! my best wishes, thousandfold, for your health and happiness. From my very heart, I wish you all that's good. Oh, if I could only go to you with this letter. But I'm glad to be home and mean to remain as long as I live. Farewell, all you good people out in the world."

Walpurga handed the letter to the pastor, who left soon afterward. He was not fond of being with the doctor, who was a sad heretic. Toward evening the doctor and his wife left, and Walpurga was not a little proud of the

fact that all the villagers knew of the distinguished visitors who had called at the cottage. None of their neighbors could boast of like honor.

The week went by quietly. Hansei was absent for several days, during which time he concluded the purchase.

The little pitchman had asked permission to be present when the money for the farm was paid, and had requested this as an especial favor. His face brightened when he saw the heaps of gold, and when Grubersepp asked: "Do you like it?" he answered, as if waking from a dream:

"Yes, it's true; I couldn't have believed it. I've often heard, in old stories, of such heaps of gold. The whole lot of stuff doesn't weigh more than a couple of pounds, and you can get the whole farm for it. Yes, yes. I'll remember that to the end of my days."

Grubersepp laughed heartily. The little, gray-haired man must have thought himself quite young to talk thus of the end of his days as a thing of the remote future.

On Friday, the pastor returned. He had not seen Countess Irma, as she had accompanied the court to a watering-place. He had left the letter at the palace, and was told that it would be forwarded to her.

CHAPTER XII.

THE weathercock turned again and indicated fair weather. The sky was almost cloudless.

With men's minds it was just the same. It was rumored in the village that Hansei had bought the farm on the other side of the lake, and that he had paid for it in ready money. How could any one harbor ill-feeling against a man who was able to do that? No; it was shameful, on the part of the innkeeper, to drive a man like Hansei, and such a woman as Walpurga, from the village. They were a credit to every one, to say nothing of the advantage it is to have such rich and good people in the place—people, moreover, who have themselves been poor and know how the poor feel.

Hansei and Walpurga now received kindly greetings

wherever they went, and all spoke of their intended departure as if it grieved them to think of it.

The ringleader on the Sunday that the band had come to the house, the very one, indeed, who wanted to play a trick on Hansei, now came and offered to engage with him as a farm-hand. Hansei replied that, for the present, he would keep the servants who were at the farm, and that, in the beginning, he would require people who knew all about the neighborhood and the farm itself. He said that he might be able to employ him later. Hansei was obliged to travel back and forth quite frequently. There were many legal matters to be arranged, and, besides, there was an old resident on the property who had a life-claim against the estate, for maintenance and support, and whom money would not induce to quit the house.

"And do you know," said Hansei, one day, "who helped me ever so much? We had quite forgotten that Stasi lives up there near the frontier, about three leagues from the farm. Her husband is the under-forester at that district. He showed me the forest, and he's quite right when he says that paths can be made, so that beams and planks may be brought down. Won't you go with me some time, and take a look at our new home?"

"I'll wait till we go there for good," answered Walpurga. "Wherever you take me to, I'll be satisfied, for we'll be together, and you can't imagine how happy mother is."

Although the grandmother had, before this, rarely thought of dying, she often complained that she wouldn't live long enough to move to the farm with them, and thus, as mother of the farmer's wife, return to where she had once been a servant.

All day long, she would tell Walpurga of the beautiful apple-trees in the great garden there, and of the brook whose water was such that the articles washed in it would become as white as snow, and that, too, without using a particle of soap. She also extolled the virtue of the people who were living there, and cautioned Walpurga to use good judgment in dispensing the gifts which it would now be her duty to bestow on others. She knew the old pensioner, and was indeed distantly related to him. They

must treat him kindly, and thus bring blessings on the house.

Time sped by, and the hour of departure gradually drew near.

Walpurga had already packed the clothing and household utensils, but was obliged to unpack them again, as they were needed.

As the time for their departure drew near, the villagers became even more kindly and affable toward them, and Walpurga complained to her mother:

"I feel just as I did when I was about to leave the palace. I was always anxious to get away, and when the time came, I felt worried about leaving."

"Yes, child," said the mother, consoling her, "it will be just the same when you leave the world. How often one would like to go, but when the time comes, one isn't anxious to leave. Oh, my child! I feel as if the whole world were speaking to me and as if I understood it all. Everything, men and women especially, seems at its best when you have to part from it. That's the way it is when one parts with life. For it isn't till then that we begin to understand how beautiful the world is, after all, and how many good hearts we leave behind us."

Walpurga and her mother were now able to talk with each other to their heart's content, for they no longer got an hour of Hansei's company. He spent much of his time with Grubersepp, whom he accompanied into the fields, and from whom he received much advice and instruction.

One evening a messenger came, asking Hansei to come to Grubersepp's at once. He hurried off and did not return until late. Walpurga and her mother, curious to know what was going on, sat up for him. It was near midnight when he returned, and Walpurga asked: "What's the matter?"

"Grubersepp has got a colt."

Walpurga and her mother almost split their sides with laughter.

"What is there to laugh at?" asked Hansei, almost angry. "And besides, the signs are that it'll be a white one."

They burst out laughing again, and Hansei looked amazed. He told them, in great earnest, that Grubersepp had sent for him, so that he might learn all about it, and he was just about to acquaint them with the latest bit of information he had acquired: namely, that foals are never born white. But he thought better of it; for it occurred to him that it wouldn't do to tell the women all he knew, for they laughed so stupidly at everything. Besides, a rich farmer ought to be on his dignity with the women; he wouldn't forget that Grubersepp was so.

Hansei received various offers for his cottage, and was always provoked when it was spoken of as a tumbledown old shanty. He always looked as if he meant to say: "Don't take it ill of me, good old house; the people only abuse you so that they may get you cheap." Hansei stood his ground. He wouldn't sell his home for a penny less than it was worth; and, besides that, he owned the fishing right, which was also worth something. Grubersepp at last took the house off his hands, with the design of putting a servant of his, who intended to marry in the fall, in possession of the place.

All the villagers were kind and friendly to them—nay, doubly so, since they were about to leave—and Hansei said:

"It hurts me to think that I must leave a single enemy behind me. I'd like to make it up with the innkeeper."

Walpurga agreed with him, and said that she would go along; that she had really been the cause of the trouble, and that if the innkeeper wanted to scold any one, he might as well scold her, too.

Hansei did not want his wife to go along, but she insisted upon it.

It was on the last evening in August, that they went up into the village. Their hearts beat violently while they drew near to the inn. There was no light in the room. They groped about the porch, but not a soul was to be seen. Dachsel and Wachsel, however, were making a heathenish racket. Hansei called out:

"Is there no one at home?"

"No. There's no one at home," answered a voice from the dark room.

"Well, then, tell the host, when he returns, that Hansei and his wife were here, and that they came to ask him to forgive them if they've done him any wrong, and to say that they forgive him, too, and wish him luck."

"All right; I'll tell him," said the voice. The door was again slammed to, and Dachsel and Wachsel began barking again.

Hansei and Walpurga returned homeward.

"Do you know who that was?" asked Hansei.

"Why, yes; 'twas the innkeeper himself."

"Well, we've done all we could."

They found it sad to part from all the villagers. They listened to the lovely tones of the bell which they had heard every hour since childhood. Although their hearts were full, they did not say a word about the sadness of parting. Hansei at last broke silence:

"Our new home isn't out of the world, we can often come here."

When they reached the cottage they found that nearly all of the villagers had assembled, in order to bid them farewell, but every one added: "I'll see you again in the morning."

Grubersepp also came again. He had been proud enough before; but now he was doubly so, for he had made a man of his neighbor, or had, at all events, helped to do so. He did not give way to tender sentiment. He condensed all his knowledge of life into a couple of sentences, which he delivered himself of most bluntly.

"I only want to tell you," said he, "you'll now have lots of servants. Take my word for it, the best of them are good for nothing; but something may be made of them, for all. He who would have his servants mow well, must himself take the scythe in hand. And since you got your riches so quickly, don't forget the proverb: 'Light come, light go.' Keep steady, or it'll go ill with you."

He gave him much more good advice, and Hansei accompanied him all the way back to his house. With a silent pressure of the hand, they took leave of each other.

The house seemed empty, for quite a number of chests and boxes had been sent in advance by a boat that was

already crossing the lake. On the following morning, two teams would be in waiting on the other side.

"So this is the last time that we go to bed in this house," said the mother. They were all fatigued with work and excitement, and yet none of them cared to go to bed. At last, however, they could not help doing so, although they all slept but little.

The next morning, they were up and about at an early hour.

Having attired themselves in their best clothes, they bundled up the beds and carried them into the boat. The mother kindled the last fire on the hearth. The cows were led out and put into the boat, the chickens were also taken along in a coop, and the dog was constantly running to and fro.

The hour of parting had come.

The mother uttered a prayer and then called all of them into the kitchen. She scooped up some water from the pail and poured it into the fire, with these words: "May all that's evil be thus poured out and extinguished, and let those who light a fire after us, find nothing but health in their home."

Hansei, Walpurga and Gundel were, each of them, obliged to pour a ladleful of water into the fire, and the grandmother guided the child's hand, while it did the same thing.

After they had all silently performed this ceremony, the grandmother prayed aloud:

"Take from us, O Lord our God! all heartache and homesickness and all trouble, and grant us health and a happy home where we next kindle our fire."

She was the first to cross the threshold. She had the child in her arms and covered its eyes with her hands, while she called out to the others:

"Don't look back when you go out."

"Just wait a moment," said Hansei to Walpurga, when he found himself alone with her. "Before we cross this threshold for the last time, I've something to tell you. I must tell it. I mean to be a righteous man and to keep nothing concealed from you. I must tell you this, Walpurga. While you were away and Black Esther lived up

yonder, I once came very near being wicked and unfaithful—thank God, I wasn't. But it torments me to think that I ever wanted to be bad; and now, Walpurga, forgive me, and God will forgive me too. Now I've told you and have nothing more to tell. If I were to appear before God this moment, I'd know of nothing more."

Walpurga embraced him and, sobbing, said: "You're my dear, good husband," and they crossed the threshold for the last time.

When they reached the garden, Hansei paused, looked up at the cherry-tree, and said:

"And so you remain here. Won't you come with us? We've always been good friends and spent many an hour together. But wait! I'll take you with me, for all," cried he, joyfully, and I'll plant you in my new home."

He carefully dug out a shoot that was sprouting up from one of the roots of the tree. He stuck it in his hat-band and went down to join his wife at the boat.

From the landing-place on the bank, were heard the merry sounds of fiddles, clarionets and trumpets.

CHAPTER XIII.

HANSEI hastened to the landing-place. The whole village had congregated there and, with it, the full band of music. Tailor Schneck's son, he who had been one of the cuirassiers at the christening of the crown prince, had arranged, and was now conducting, the parting ceremonies. Schneck, who was scraping his bass viol, was the first to see Hansei, and he called out, in the midst of the music:

"Long live farmer Hansei and the one he loves best! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The early dawn resounded with their cheers. There was a flourish of trumpets, and the salutes fired from several small mortars were echoed back from the mountains. The large boat in which their household furniture, the two cows and their fowls were placed, was adorned with wreaths of fir and oak. Walpurga was standing in the middle of the boat, and with both hands held the child

aloft, so that it might see the great crowd of friends and the lake sparkling in the rosy dawn.

"My master's best respects," said one of Grubersepp's servants, leading a snow-white colt by the halter, "he sends you this to remember him by."

Grubersepp was not present. He disliked noise and crowds. He was of a solitary and self-contained temperament. Nevertheless, he sent a present which was not only of intrinsic value, but was also a most flattering souvenir; for a colt is usually given by a rich farmer to a younger brother when about to depart. In the eyes of all the world, that is to say, the whole village, Hansei appeared as the younger brother of Grubersepp.

Little Burgei shouted for joy when she saw them leading the snow-white foal into the boat.

Gruberwaldl, who was but six years old, stood by the whinnying colt stroking it, and speaking kindly to it.

"Would you like to go to the farm with me and be my servant?" asked Hansei of Gruberwaldl.

"Yes indeed, if you'll take me."

"See, what a boy he is," said Hansei to his wife. "What a boy!"

Walpurga made no answer, but busied herself with the child.

Hansei shook hands with every one at parting. His hand trembled, but he did not forget to give a couple of crown thalers to the musicians.

At last he got into the boat and exclaimed:

"Kind friends! I thank you all. Don't forget us, and we shan't forget you. Farewell! may God protect you all."

Walpurga and her mother were in tears.

"And now, in God's name, let us start." The chains were loosened; the boat put off. Music, shouting, singing, and the firing of cannon resounded while the boat quietly moved away from the shore. The sun burst forth in all his glory.

The mother sat there, with her hands clasped. All were silent. The only sound heard was the neighing of the foal.

Walpurga was the first to break the silence. "O dear

Lord! if people would only show each other half as much love during life as they do when one dies or moves away."

The mother, who was in the middle of a prayer, shook her head. She quickly finished her prayer and said: "That's more than one has a right to ask. It won't do to go about all day long with your heart in your hand. But remember, I've always told you that the people are good enough at heart, even if there are a few bad ones among them."

Hansei bestowed an admiring glance upon his wife, who had so many different thoughts about almost everything. He supposed it was caused by her having been away from home. But his heart was full too, although in a different way.

"I can hardly realize," said Hansei, taking a long breath and putting the pipe which he had intended to light back into his pocket, "what has become of all the years that I spent there and all that I went through during the time. Look, Walpurga! the road you see there leads to my home. I know every hill and every hollow. My mother's buried there. Do you see the pines growing on the hill over yonder? That hill was quite bare; every tree was cut down when the French were here; and see how fine and hardy the trees are now. I planted most of them myself. I was a little boy about eleven or twelve years old when the forester hired me. He had fresh soil brought for the whole place and covered the rocky spots with moss. In the spring, I worked from six in the morning till seven in the evening, putting in the little plants. My left hand was almost frozen, for I had to keep putting it into a tub of wet loam with which I covered the roots. I was scantily clothed into the bargain, and had nothing to eat, all day long, but a piece of bread. In the morning it was cold enough to freeze the marrow in one's bones, and at noon I was almost roasted by the hot sun beating on the rocks. It was a hard life. Yes, I had a hard time of it when I was young. Thank God, it hasn't harmed me any. But I shan't forget it; and let's be right industrious and give all we can to the poor. I never would have believed that I'd live to call a single

tree or a handful of earth my own; and now that God has given me so much, let's try and deserve it all."

Hansei's eyes blinked, as if there was something in them, and he pulled his hat down over his forehead. Now, while he was pulling himself up by the roots, as it were, he could not help thinking of how thoroughly he had become engrafted into the neighborhood by the work of his hands and by habit. He had felled many a tree, but he knew full well how hard it was to remove the stumps.

The foal grew restive. Gruberwaldl, who had come with them in order to hold it, was not strong enough, and one of the boatmen was obliged to go to his assistance.

"Stay with the foal," said Hansei. "I'll take the oar."

"And I, too," cried Walpurga. "Who knows when I'll have another chance? Ah! how often I've rowed on the lake with you and my blessed father."

Hansei and Walpurga sat side by side plying their oars in perfect time. It did them both good to have some employment which would enable them to work off the excitement.

"I shall miss the water," said Walpurga; "without the lake, life'll seem so dull and dry. I felt that, while I was in the city."

Hansei did not answer.

"At the summer palace, there's a pond with swans swimming about in it," said she, but still received no answer. She looked around, and a feeling of anger arose within her. When she said anything at the palace, it was always listened to.

In a sorrowful tone, she added: "It would have been better if we'd moved in the spring; it would have been much easier to get used to things."

"Maybe it would," replied Hansei, at last, "but I've got to hew wood in the winter. Walpurga, let's make life pleasant to each other, and not sad. I shall have enough on my shoulders, and can't have you and your palace thoughts besides."

Walpurga quickly answered: "I'll throw this ring, which the queen gave me, into the lake, to prove that I've stopped thinking of the palace."

"There's no need of that. The ring's worth a nice sum and, besides that, it's an honorable keepsake. You must do just as I do."

"Yes; only remain strong and true."

The mother suddenly stood up before them. Her features were illumined with a strange expression and she said:

"Children! Hold fast to the good fortune that you have. You've gone through fire and water together; for it was fire when you were surrounded by joy and love and every one greeted you with kindness—and you passed through the water, when the wickedness of others stung you to the soul. At that time, the water was up to your neck, and yet you weren't drowned. Now you've got over it all. And when my last hour comes, don't weep for me; for through you I've enjoyed all the happiness a mother's heart can have in this world."

She knelt down, scooped up some water with her hand and sprinkled it over Hansei's, and also over Walpurga's face.

They rowed on, in silence. The mother laid her head on a roll of bedding and closed her eyes. Her face wore a strange expression. After a while she opened her eyes again, and casting a glance full of happiness on her children, she said:

"Sing and be merry. Sing the song that father and I so often sang together; that one verse, the good one."

Hansei and Walpurga plied the oars while they sang:

"Ah, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee;
And swiftly speed the hours by,
When thou art near to me."

They repeated the verse again, although, at times, the joyous shouting of the child and the neighing of the foal bade fair to interrupt it.

The singing and shouting was suddenly interrupted by a young sailor, who cried out:

"There's some one floating there! it's a human being—there! the head's over water! don't you see it? there's the long, coal-black hair floating on the water. Some woman's drowned herself, or has fallen overboard."

Every one in the boat looked toward the point indicated. The object rose and fell on the waves. It appeared to be a human face that would, now and then, rise to the surface and sink again. All were dumb with terror, and Hansei rubbed his eyes, asking himself: "Was it imagination or was it reality?" He thought he had recognized the face of Black Esther rising on the waves and sinking again. It floated on, further and further, and, at last, sank out of sight.

"It's nothing," said Walpurga, "it's nothing. Don't let us make ourselves unhappy."

"You're a stupid fellow," said the old boatman, scolding his comrade. "It was nothing but a dead crow or some other bird floating on the water. Who'd say such a thing?" added he in a whisper. "If we get but little drink-money, it'll be your fault. They were so happy that they'd have given us a thaler at least, but now you can see Hansei rummaging in his purse. He's looking for small change, and it's all your fault."

Without knowing why, Hansei had indeed pulled out his purse, and was fumbling in it. He was so bewildered with what he had seen—it was true, after all—but it could not be right—just now—to-day, when all was forgiven and past; and, after all, he hadn't sinned.

In order to regain his composure, he counted out several pieces of money. That restored his spirits. He was able to count; his senses had returned. He had resigned the oar and, with his piece of chalk, had actually been making some calculations on the bench. But he soon rubbed them out again.

"There's the other shore," said he, looking up and lifting his hat, "we'll soon be there. I can see the wagon and horses and Uncle Peter there already. I can see our blue chest."

"Heavens!" cried Wapurga, and the oar remained motionless in her hands. "Heavens! Who is it? Who is that figure? I can take my oath that, while we were singing, I thought to myself: If only my good Countess Irma could see us sitting in the boat together. It would have made her happy to see that, and just then it seemed to me as if—"

"I'm glad," said Hansei, interrupting her, "that we're getting to shore. If this lasts much longer, we'll all lose our wits."

On the distant shore, some one was seen running to and fro. The figure was wrapped in a flowing dress, and suddenly started when the wind wafted the sound of music across toward her. She sank to the earth and seemed to be crouching on the bank. Now that the sound had died away, she arose and fled, disappearing among the bushes.

"Didn't you see anything?" asked Walpurga again.

"Yes, indeed. If I was superstitious, and it wasn't in the day-time, I'd have thought it was the Lady of the Lake."

The boat reached the bank. Walpurga was the first to leap ashore. Leaving her people, she ran toward the bushes as fast as she could, and there, behind the willows, the figure fell on her neck and fainted.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

THE summer was almost at an end when the court returned from the baths.

The king's first official act was to sign the proclamation of the Schnabelsdorf ministry, dissolving the refractory Chamber of Deputies and ordering a new election.

The king was displeased; and yet, that which now surprised him was the inevitable consequence of his previous doings. He had returned in high spirits, but, like an importunate creditor, the state was already thrusting its claims upon him.

He felt happy that his government met with popular approval; but that, he thought, should be a matter of course. And now a great question was to be submitted to the country, and there were doubts as to what the answer might be.

Schnabelsdorf exercised his great conversational gifts, and adroitly endeavored to humor the heroic side of the king's character. But his efforts were in vain.

The whole land was in great commotion, but of this they knew little or nothing at court. The autumn maneuvers had begun, and in a few days the court expected to move to the summer palace, after which, hunting in the Highlands was to begin.

The king had seldom taken so lively an interest in the maneuvers. The ease and precision with which, on such occasions, large bodies of men were moved at will, afforded a suggestive contrast to the spirit of disorganization and breaking away from authority which seemed abroad in the land. Nothing, however, was further from his

thoughts than the idea of bringing the two opposing tendencies to bear upon each other.

At the court assemblages, the king always seemed to be in an exceptionally pleasant mood. The greater his ill-humor, the more he regarded it his duty to keep up the outward semblance of cheerfulness. The habit, acquired in youth, of always keeping up his dignity; the knowledge that the eyes of all were upon him; a due consideration for the claims of those about him; the need of always speaking the right word at the right time; above all, the art of ignoring—an art in which others refrain from indulging themselves, and which, for that very reason, requires practice—and, added to this, the consciousness of possessing kingly power:—all this prevented him from betraying the slightest trace of ill-humor. He manifested a lively interest in whatever was going on, especially so, when Irma was present. She, above all, should never find him wavering, for she would have misinterpreted it. It was therefore necessary, in her presence, to keep up that exalted mood which regards dissent or contradiction as impossible, and thus esteems itself as above the law. And yet the king felt the danger of encouraging a secret passion while all his strength was required by a weighty problem, in the solution of which he would necessarily encounter great opposition.

Irma returned from her visit to the seashore refreshed and invigorated. She was more beautiful than ever, but was rarely seen at court, as she spent much of her time with Arabella. On the day after Arabella had given birth to a boy, Irma and the doctor left Bruno's house together.

Irma was about to say: "I am beginning to get tired of this everlasting nursery," but checked herself in time.

The doctor did not utter a word, while accompanying her down the carpeted stairs. His features wore a serious expression. He had been living in the great world for many years, but, even now, it offended his sense of justice when he saw the joys of paternity fall to the share of one who, like Bruno, had led what is mildly termed a "fast life." The doctor pressed the ivory handle of his cane against his lips, as if thus to prevent his thoughts

from finding vent in words. Silently, he seated himself in the carriage with Irma. They drove to the palace.

"My sister-in-law has imposed a difficult task upon me," said Irma.

Gunther did not inquire as to the nature of the task, and Irma was obliged to continue of herself:

"She made me promise that I'd inform father of the birth of his grandson. If you were still on former terms of intimacy with him, you would be the best mediator."

"I can do nothing," replied Gunther, curtly. He was unusually reserved in his manner toward Irma. She felt conscious of this, and felt, too, that she no longer had a right to claim unreserved confidence on the part of her friends. But as she did not wish to break with those whom she esteemed, it was necessary to maintain relations of courtesy with them.

"I believe that Bruno's better nature will now assert itself," said Irma. She forced herself to speak, and trembled when she thought that the man who sat beside her might suddenly ask her: "What have you done with *your* better nature?"

The carriage stopped before the palace. Irma alighted and Gunther drove home.

Once in her room, Irma pressed both hands to her heart as if to allay the storm within. "Must I beg every one to prove his friendly feeling by silence, or to admit that I am right? Those who despise the world's laws and have soared above them, had better cease to live." She aroused herself by a violent effort and began the letter to her father. She complained that she had had no news from him for a long while. She wrote about Arabella, informed him that Bruno had become a steady *paterfamilias*, and, at last, mentioned the birth of the grandson. She also wrote that Arabella begged for a few lines from the grandfather, and that they would render her happy.

Irma found her letter a difficult task. Her pen usually responded to every varying phase of feeling; but, that day, it seemed to stumble and hesitate. She leaned back in her chair, and picked up a letter that she had found lying there. It was Walpurga's. She smiled while reading it, and enjoyed the satisfaction of having benefited a

fellow-creature who, although distant, held her in faithful remembrance.

The waiting-maid announced Bruno's groom. Irma had him come in. He had come to express his master's desire that the gracious countess should at once dispatch the letter she had promised to write, and said that he had been ordered to take it to the post-office himself. Irma sealed it and gave it to him.

Bruno, seated in his dog-cart, was waiting at the corner of the palace square. The groom handed him the letter. Bruno put it in his pocket. He drove to the post-office and, with his own hands, dropped a letter into the box. This epistle, however, was directed to a lady. The one intended for his father he retained in his possession. He was determined not to humble himself, either through his sister or his wife.

The box into which Bruno dropped the perfumed *billet-doux* contained letters for old Eberhard,—letters which Bruno could not intercept.

CHAPTER II.

ON the very morning that his first grandchild was born, Count Eberhard was returning, with a light heart, from a walk in the fields. They had begun, that day, to gather the first harvest from a large, tray-formed tract of land which had once been a swamp. Eberhard had drained the desolate tract with great care and judgment, and now it produced unequalled crops. The sight of the ripened grain waving in the gentle breeze, inspired him with pure and happy feelings, and he thought of the generations to come, who would derive sustenance from a tract of land rendered fertile by him.

He felt no desire to impart his happiness to another. He had accustomed himself, in the past, to live within himself. His one real life-burden he had confessed to his daughter. He thoroughly enjoyed the repose which solitude alone affords. He imagined that pure reflection had conquered all passion. He always obeyed the inner voice of nature; there was no one for whose sake he was

obliged to repress it. He had faithfully endeavored to perfect himself, and, while placing himself beyond the reach of temptation, had, at the same time, withdrawn from social activity.

When he left his work in field or forest, it was to commune with those great ones who had long since left the world, and with whose profoundest thoughts he felt himself in full accord.

He had just come in from the fields and was about to repair to his library, there to converse with a spirit that had long since left this world. His step was steady, his mind was calm and placid. He could, at will, preserve a certain state of feeling, or resign himself to the guidance of a spirit living in another sphere. His life lay in two distinct spheres, and yet the transition from one to the other was never violent.

The impressions of the moment had already clothed themselves in words, and he was about to note them down in a little book which bore the inscription: "Self-redemption."

Entering the manor-house, he found a number of persons waiting for him in the great, long, harvest hall, which was hung with garlands and wreaths. They saluted him as he approached. The village burgomaster, who had, hitherto, represented that district at the Diet, and many other persons of local importance were assembled there. The burgomaster was the spokesman of the party, and stated that, in the forthcoming election, it would be necessary to relinquish the field to blockheads and bigots, unless they could nominate a candidate whose high personal character and influence would secure them victory. Colonel Bronnen, who had been recommended by Count Eberhard, had refused to stand, and now Count Eberhard was the only one who could defeat the enemy. The electors said that they well knew what a sacrifice it would be for him to take part in the canvass. They had, therefore, waited until now, the day of the election, and they urgently entreated him not to withdraw at the eleventh hour.

"Yes," added the burgomaster, "you've drained a

swamp and carried off the foul water; and now you must help us in this, too."

To their great surprise and delight, Eberhard, without further objection, declared his willingness to stand. He had succeeded in one undertaking, and, from a sense of duty, felt that he had no right to avoid assuming the greater trust now offered him. The old enemy was still in force, and it was meet that the old warriors should go forth to battle against him.

The friends left and, after giving a few orders to the servants, Eberhard followed. He rode a large, powerful horse, such as a large, strong man requires. He caught up with his friends before they reached the town, and thus made his entry with quite a following.

He presented himself before the assembled electors. The hall was almost full. The people were astonished to see the count, but the glances turned toward him were soon withdrawn, and much whispered conversation ensued. Making his way through the crowd, Eberhard walked up to the speaker's stand. Few stood up or greeted him. Why was it? At other times, the crowd would always make way for him; but to-day, he had to push his way through them. It almost vexed him, but he controlled himself. "This is the true effect of free thought; homage should not be bestowed according to custom and precedence; it should only be for those who have earned it. You are still an aristocrat at heart, and are still filled with pride of ancestry—pride in your own past." Such were the thoughts that passed through his mind, while, with a smile, he rejoiced in the victory he had won over himself.

The first one to mount the speaker's stand was the candidate of the "Blacks," as the popular party termed their opponents. He spoke with cleverness, but without fervor, and it was evident that his address had been carefully studied. He made several clever points, however, which were received with loud applause.

The retiring delegate came forward and, stating that he declined a re-election, proposed Count Eberhard of Wildenort, the tried champion of freedom and popular rights.

The assembly seemed taken by surprise. There was but little clapping of hands, and few bravos were heard.

Count Eberhard was quite taken aback by this cold reception, and looked about him in astonishment. The burgomaster whispered to him that this was a sure sign of victory, and that the enemy was confounded. Eberhard merely nodded. A strange feeling of embarrassment arose within him. He repressed it, and mounted the speaker's stand. With every step, he gained in courage and became more fully persuaded that it was his duty to defend the new trust without regard to thought of self. He began his speech by giving an account of his past life and struggles, adding, with a smile, that there were many present who, like himself, had gray hairs, and that there was no need of telling them what he desired. He was glad, however, to find that there were so many younger men present. They listened with considerable patience. Among the opposition there was, now and then, loud talking, which was, however, soon silenced. Eberhard went on speaking. Suddenly loud peals of laughter resounded through the assembly, and the words "left-handed father-in-law" were heard. Eberhard did not know what it meant, and went on with his remarks. The talking in the crowd grew louder. Drops of cold sweat stood on his brow. The burgomaster mounted the stand and exclaimed: "Whoever isn't willing to listen to a man like Count Eberhard, doesn't deserve to have a vote."

Breathless silence ensued. Eberhard concluded with the words:

"I am proud enough to tell you that I don't ask you for your votes. I simply say that I accept the nomination."

He left the assembly, but, before doing so, begged his friends to remain. He rode home, filled with the thought that he had separated himself from the world, instead of having conquered it.

He alighted as soon as he came to his own land in the valley, and gave orders to some of the laborers. When he returned to the road, he met the postman, who handed him several letters. Eberhard opened the first and read:

"Your daughter has fallen into disgrace, and yet stands in high grace as the mistress of the king. To her the country owes the restoration of the ecclesiastical ministry. If you still doubt, ask the first person you meet in the streets of the capital. Unhappy father of a happy daughter." It was signed "The Public Voice."

Eberhard tore up the letter and gave the shreds to the winds, which carried them far away over the fields.

"Anonymous letters," said he, "are the meanest things conceivable. They are far lower than cowardly assassination, and yet—" It seemed as if the breeze which carried the shreds away had now returned, laden with the expression that he had heard at the meeting. Had they not said "left-handed father-in-law"?

Eberhard pressed his hand to his brow—the thought was like a burning arrow piercing his brain. He opened the second letter and read: "You do not care to believe how it stands with your daughter. Ask him who 'was once your friend. Ask the king's physician, on his honor and conscience. He will tell you the truth. Save what may yet be saved. Then will the writer of these lines divulge his name. From one who greatly esteems you. * * *"

Eberhard did not destroy this letter; he held it in his trembling hand. A mist suddenly rose before him. He passed his hands over his eyes as if to brush it away; but it still remained, growing denser with each succeeding moment. He tried to read the letter again, but could not distinguish a word of it. He crumpled up the paper and put it in his breast-pocket, where it lay like a burning coal against his heart. His head swam and he sat down by the wayside. What could he do? They would smile if he went to court to fetch her. They would be very gracious and would say: "Let there be no scenes, no noise. Let everything be arranged quietly; let there be no scandal; decorum must be maintained." And one must smile, though his heart is bursting. We live in a civilized world, and this they call culture and good manners. Oh! you are well off. With you, all is pastime. You can afford to be ever polite, ever cool and reserved. Oh, why did I come home to waste my pow-

ers in this miserable nook! It's all my own fault. I meant to rescue myself from the hurly-burly of the world. I've lost my children, instead. A satanic sophist lurks in us all. I persuaded myself that it was better, and more in accordance with nature, to let my children grow up, free from all control; and yet it was only a vain excuse for my own weakness. Because the duty of incessantly watching over them was distasteful to me, I suffered them to go to ruin, while persuading myself that their nature could thus best develop itself. And here I stand, and must fetch my child—"

The sudden neighing of the horse, hitched to a tree near by, so startled Eberhard that he almost fell back. A laborer who was bringing two horses in from the field, stopped and asked: "What ails you, master?"

The laborer unhitched the horse. Eberhard rose hastily and, without saying a word, walked up the hill in the direction of the manor-house. He felt as if the air was filled with intangible, electric clouds that drew him back; but he forced his way through them. He reached the house and held fast by the doorposts. He was giddy, but still he did not give up. He went through the stables and barns, saw the men storing away the fodder, and remained looking at them for a long while. Then he went through the whole house and looked at every object with an inquiring gaze. In the great room with the bay-window, he lingered long before a picture of Irma, painted when she was but seven years old, a beautiful, large-eyed child. The attitude was natural, a mixture of childlike awkwardness and grace. The painter had wanted to put a nosegay in the child's hand, but she had said: "I won't have dead flowers; give me a pot with living flowers in it." Ah, she had had such pretty conceits! There she stood, the very picture of childish grace, with rosy cheeks, and with blooming roses in her hand. "A rose plucked before the storm could scatter its petals." These last words of Emilia Galotti passed through his mind. "No, I am not that strong."

He rang, but when the servant came, had forgotten what he wanted. The effort to collect his scattered thoughts seemed like plunging into chaos. At last he

ordered the carriage, which was all he had wanted the servant for.

"The traveling carriage," he called out after the servant.

When he reached the library, he paused, and gazed at the door for a while. There were so many great and mighty minds in there—why did none of them come to his aid? There is no help but that we find within ourselves.

While descending the steps, he would now and then hold fast to the baluster as if to support himself. He drew himself up, as if filled with anger because of the weakness that mastered him. In the courtyard, he gave orders that the carriage should drive on and meet him down in the valley. His speech was noticeably indistinct. Half way down the mountain, he suddenly seated himself on a heap of stones and looked about him.

What was passing before his eyes? What thoughts filled his mind? He looked for the tree which he had planted on the very spot where word was brought him of Irma's birth. This is the first soil trodden by her feet; these are the first trees she ever saw. The sky, the forests, the mountains, the blooming flowers, the merry birds, the grazing cows—all, all seemed like phantoms.—None of these will ever find you pure again. Never again dare you approach a living creature, or tree or flower; for they repudiate you, they are pure and you are—the world's a paradise. You have been driven thence, and roam about, a restless fugitive. You may deaden your conscience, may smile and jest and dissemble, but the sun does not dissemble, neither does the earth, nor your own conscience. You've destroyed the world and yourself, and still live,—dead in a dead world. How is it possible? It cannot be. I am mad. I shall neither punish nor chastise you; but you must know who and what you are, and the knowledge of that will be your punishment and your cure. I shall palliate nothing; you must know, see, and acknowledge it all, yourself—

A road laborer went up to the count and asked whether he was ill. He had noticed him sitting on the stones, and supposed that something might be wrong.

"Not well!" groaned Eberhard, "not well? It would be well for me if I—"

He got up and walked away.

A grief stricken mother can shed tears; a father cannot.

His head was bowed on his chest. He saw blooming roses; they should have adorned her. He saw thorns; they should tear her brow. Anger and grief struggled within him. Anger raged; grief wept. Anger would have lent him giant strength, with which to destroy the world; but grief crushed his very soul.

Suddenly he drew himself up, and, as if driven by the storm, ran down the road, over the ditch and across the meadow,—only stopping when he reached the apple-tree.

"This is the tree—you're decked with ruddy fruit—and she— Woe is me! life is pitiless!"

A deep cry of pain escaped him. The road laborer above, and the driver who was waiting with the carriage below, heard him and ran to his help. They found him lying on the ground, face downward. He was foaming at the mouth and was unable to speak. They bore him into the castle.

CHAPTER III.

THROUGHOUT the capital, schools, offices, and workshops were closed. With the exception of, now and then, a noisy group of men who soon entered a large building and disappeared from view, the streets were given over to women and children. It was election day. It seemed as if the thousand and one diversified interests and sentiments that help to make up the life of a city had converged to a single point—as if a great soul were communing with itself. Although it was in broad daylight, a wondrous silence rested upon the deserted streets. Gunther's carriage had just come from Bruno's house, and now stopped at the town-hall. The doctor alighted, went upstairs and gave in his vote. In consideration of his being a physician in active practice, he was allowed to vote before his turn. He returned to his carriage and drove home. When he entered the sit-

ting-room, his wife handed him a telegram which had just been received. Gunther opened it.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Madame Gunther, for she had never before seen so great a change in her husband's face.

He handed her the telegram and she read:

"Count Eberhard Wildenort paralyzed. Deprived of speech. Send word to son and daughter to come at once; if possible, you also.

"DOCTOR MANN, *District Physician.*"

"You are going?" said Madame Gunther in an agitated, but scarcely inquiring tone. Gunther nodded affirmatively.

"I've one request to make," continued Madame Gunther. With a slight motion of his hand, the doctor intimated that he wished her to proceed. He felt as if his tongue were palsied.

"I'd like to go with you," said she.

"I don't understand you."

"Sit down," said the wife, and when Gunther had seated himself, she placed her gentle hand upon his lofty forehead. His face brightened, and she went on to say:

"Wilhelm, this is a terrible visitation. Let me do all I can to alleviate the grief of the lost child whom this dread message will soon reach. I can imagine her feelings. Who knows? Perhaps her own actions have been the cause of this.—Although she rides in her carriage, I shall assist her as faithfully as if she were a poor outcast; and if the poor soul repels me, I shall not leave her. I don't know what may happen, but the moment may come when she will feel it a comfort to rest the head now scourged by thorns against a woman's heart. Do let me go with you?"

"I've no objection. For the present, however, you had better get everything ready for my departure." He drove to Bruno's house.

As soon as the latter noticed his sad looks, he exclaimed: "And so your party was beaten?"

"Not yet," replied Gunther, gently breaking the news to Bruno.

Bruno turned away, hurriedly gathered up several letters that were lying on the table and locked them up in his desk. He was soon ready to go with Gunther to Irma, to whom they broke the sad news as gently as possible.

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried Irma. Not another word escaped her. She went into her bedchamber and threw herself on the bed; but she had hardly touched the pillow before she sprang up as if thrust back, and then knelt on the floor and swooned away. When she returned to the reception room, her features wore a fixed, rigid expression. She gave hurried orders to her servant and her maid to prepare for the journey. The doctor withdrew, in order to ask for leave of absence, and promised to procure leave for Irma, too.

"You ought to bid adieu to the queen, before you go," said Bruno.

"No, no!" cried Irma vehemently. "I cannot; I will not."

There was no servant in the antechamber. There was a knock at the door. Irma started. "Was the king coming?"

"Come in!" said Bruno. Madame Gunther entered.

Irma could not utter a word, but her eyes seemed to ask: "You here? and now?"

Madame Gunther told her that she had heard the sad news, and would regard it as a proof of her friendship, if Irma would allow her to accompany her.

"Thank you, with all my heart," stammered Irma.

"Then you grant my request?"

"I thank you; on my knees, I'll thank you; but I beg of you, don't make me talk much now."

"There's no need of your doing so, dear Countess," said Madame Gunther. "You've apparently neglected or forgotten me; but in your heart, you've remembered me. And even if it were otherwise, there was one short hour during which we opened our hearts to each other."

Irma raised her hands as if to shield herself,—as if the kind words pierced her like so many arrows. In a soothing voice, Madame Gunther added: "I shall consider it a kindness, if you will allow me to be kind to you; you

have no mother and, perhaps—you will soon have no father."

Irma groaned aloud and pressed her hands to her eyes.

"My dear child," said Madame Gunther, placing her hand upon Irma's arm. Irma started—"there are many of God's creatures on earth, so that the sympathy of those whom misfortune has spared may serve as a support to the afflicted, and as a light in the hour of darkness. I beg of you, do not be proud in your grief. Let me share in all that the next few days may have in store for you."

"Proud? proud?" asked Irma, suddenly grasping Madame Gunther's hand and as suddenly dropping it again. "No, dear honored madame. I appreciate your affectionate motives. I understand—I know—all. I could calmly accept your kindness. I know—at least I think—that I, too, would have just acted as you do, if—"

"This is the best and the only thanks," interposed Madame Gunther, but Irma motioned her to stop, and continued:

"I entreat you, do not torture me. Your husband and my brother will accompany me. I beg of you, say nothing more. I thank you; I shall never forget your kindness."

Gunther entered the room again and Irma said:

"Is everything ready? We have no time to lose."

She bowed to Madame Gunther, and would gladly have embraced her, but could not.

Madame Gunther, who had never, before this, set foot in the palace, had only come to succor a ruined one. Never had the thought of herself so filled Irma with anguish and remorse, as when this embodiment of loving-kindness had held out her hand to her.

The thought that she no longer dared approach the pure pained her as if demons were tearing her to pieces. Her first impulse was to throw herself at Madame Gunther's feet.

She controlled herself, however, and, looking at her with a fixed gaze, passed on.

The parrot in the anteroom spread out its wings, as if it, too, wanted to go along, and screamed: "God keep you, Irma!"

As if veiled in a cloud, Irma walked through the corridor. At the palace gate, she met the king coming out of the park with Schnabelsdorf, who had a number of dispatches in his hand, and whose cheerful looks were owing to the news of victory which he had just received.

To Irma, the king and Schnabelsdorf seemed like misty forms. She wore a double black veil, for she did not care to gratify the idle curiosity of the court, by making a show of the face on which grief had done its work.

The king drew near. She could not remove her veil. He seemed far, far away. She heard his friendly and, of course, kind words, but she knew not what he said.

The king extended his hand to Gunther, then to Bruno, and, at last, to Irma. He pressed her hand tenderly, but she did not return the pressure.

They got into the carriage. Just as they were about to start, Irma, noticing Madame Gunther's hand on the carriage door, bent down and kissed it. The next moment they were gone.

They were silent for some time. After they had passed the first village, Bruno took out a cigar, saying to Irma, who sat opposite him: "I'm a man, and a man must calmly accept the inevitable. Show that you, too, have a strong mind."

Irma did not reply. She threw back her veil and looked out of the window. Her departure had been so hurried that she was just beginning to recover herself.

"You ought to have taken leave of the queen in person," said Bruno, in a calm tone. The long silence was irksome to him. Such dark hours should be made to pass as agreeably as possible. When he found that Irma still remained silent, he added: "For you know that the queen's tender nature is so easily offended."

Irma still made no reply, but Gunther said:

"Yes; it were sacrilege to offend the queen. No one but a savage would dare to weaken her faith in human goodness and veracity."

Gunther expressed himself with unwonted energy, and his words cut Irma to the heart. Was it she who had committed sacrilege? And then the thought gradually dawned upon her; the queen is his ideal; the king is

mine. Who knows whether the mask of intellectual affinity may not have served to screen—Quick as thought, she dropped her veil; her breathing was short and fast; her cheeks were burning. He who knows himself to be—must judge others—nothing is perfect—no one—She felt as if she must speak, and at last said: "The queen deserves to have a friend like you."

"I place myself beside you," said Gunther calmly. "I believe that we both deserve the friendship of that pure heart."

"And so you believe that friendship can exist between married people of different sex?" inquired Bruno.

"I know it," replied Gunther.

At the first posting-house, where they came upon noisy crowds, the postmaster informed them that the election was going on, and that the contest was quite an excited one. The "Blacks" would certainly be defeated.

Bruno, who had alighted, asked the postillion:

"My noble fellow-citizen, have you exercised your sovereign right of voting to-day?"

"Yes, and against the 'Blacks'."

They drove on.

Bruno did not get out at the other stations. They were drawing near to Eberhard's district. While they were changing horses at the assize town, they heard loud cries of: "Long live Count Eberhard! Victory!"

"What's that?" inquired Gunther, putting his head out of the carriage door.

He was informed that, in spite of the "Blacks," Count Eberhard would prove the victor. The opposition had started a contemptible rumor, intended to disgrace the old count. But, although meant to injure others, it had proved a stumbling-block to themselves; for every one had said: "A father can't help what his child does, and, for that very reason, greater respect should now be shown him."—Irma drew back into the dark corner of the carriage and held her breath.

They drove on without saying a word.

After they had started, Bruno said it was too warm for him in the carriage, and that it did not agree with him to ride backward. Still, he would not suffer Gunther to

change seats with him. He ordered the carriage to stop and, telling the lackey to sit up with the driver, placed himself on the back seat, next to the waiting-maid. Irma took off her hat and laid her head back. It was heavy with sad thoughts. Now and then, when the road lay along the edge of a precipice, she would quickly raise herself in her seat. She felt as if she must plunge into the abyss; but, weak and feeble, she would fall back again. Gunther, too, remained silent; and thus they drove on through the night, without uttering a word.

At one time, the waiting-maid would have laughed out aloud, but Bruno held his hand over her mouth and prevented her.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was near midnight when the travelers reached castle Wildenort. The servant said that the count was sleeping, and that the physician who lived in the valley was with him. The country-doctor left the sick-room and came out into the ante-chamber to welcome the new arrivals. He was about to describe the case to Gunther, who, however, requested him not to do so until he had himself seen the patient. Accompanied by Irma and Bruno, he went into the sick-room.

Eberhard lay in bed, his head propped up by pillows. His eyes were wide open, and, without showing the slightest emotion, he stared at those who entered, as if they were figures in a dream.

"I greet you, Eberhard, with all my heart," said Gunther. The sick man's features twitched convulsively, and his eyelids rose quickly and as quickly fell again, while he gropingly put forth his hand toward his old friend. But the hand sank powerless on the coverlet. Gunther grasped it and held it fast.

Irma stood as if rooted to the spot, unable to move or utter a word.

"How are you, papa?" asked Bruno.

With a sudden start, as if a shot had whizzed by his ear, Eberhard turned toward Bruno and motioned to him to leave the room.

Irma knelt down at his bedside, while Eberhard passed his trembling hand over her face. It became wet with her tears. Suddenly, he drew it back, as if it had been touching a poisonous reptile. He averted his face and pressed his brow against the wall; and thus he lay for a long while.

Neither Gunther nor Irma spoke a word. Their voices failed them in the presence of him who had been deprived of speech. And now Eberhard turned again and gently motioned his daughter to leave the room. She did so.

Gunther remained alone with Eberhard. It was the first time in thirty years that the two friends had met. Eberhard passed Gunther's hand across his eyes, and then shook his head.

Gunther said: "I know what you mean; you would like to weep, but cannot. Do you understand all I say to you?"

The patient nodded affirmatively.

"Then just imagine," continued Gunther, and his voice has a rich and comforting tone, "that the years we've been separated from each other were but one hour. Our measure of time is a different one. Do you still remember how you would often in enthusiastic moments exclaim: 'We've just been living centuries'?"

There was again a convulsive twitching of the patient's features, just as when a weeping one is enlivened by a cheerful thought and would fain smile, but cannot.

Eberhard attempted to trace letters on the coverlet, but Gunther found it difficult to decipher them.

The sick man pointed to a table on which there lay books and manuscripts. Gunther brought several of them, but none was the right one. At last he brought a little manuscript book, the cover of which was inscribed with the title, "Self-redemption." The sick man seemed pleased, as if welcoming a fortunate occurrence.

"You wrote this yourself. Shall I read some of it to you?"

Eberhard nodded assent. Gunther sat down by the bed and read:

"May this serve to enlighten me on the day and in the hour when my mind becomes obscured.

"I have been much given to introspection. I have endeavored to study myself, without regard to the outward conditions of time, standpoint, or circumstance. I perceive it, but, as yet, I cannot grasp it. It is a dew-drop shut up in the heart of a rock.

"There are moments when I am fully up to the ideal I have formed for myself, but there are many more when I am merely the caricature of my better self. How am I to form a conception of my actual self? What am I?

"I perceive that I am a something belonging to the universe and to eternity.

"During the blessed moments, sometimes drawn out into hours, in which I realize this conception, there is naught but life for me—no such thing as death, either for me or the world.

"In my dying hour, I should like to be as clearly conscious as I now am that I am in God, and that God is in me.

"Religion may claim warmth of feeling and glory of imagination as her portion. We, on the other hand, have attained to that clear vision which includes both feeling and imagination.

"In troubled, restless days, when I endeavored to grasp the Infinite, I felt as if melting away, vanishing, disappearing. I longed to know: What is God?

"And now I possess our master's answer: Although we cannot picture God to ourselves, yet we have a clear idea or conception of Him.

"For us, the old commandment: 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself any image of God,' signifies *thou canst* not make to thyself any image of God. Every image is finite; the idea of God is that of infinity.

"Spinoza teaches that we must regard ourselves as a part of God—

"While endeavoring to grasp the idea of the whole, I came to understand what is meant by the words: 'The human mind is part of the divine mind.'

"A single drop rises on the surface of the stormy ocean of life. It lasts but a second—though men term it three-score years and ten—and then, glowing with the light it receives and imparts, sinks again.

"Man, regarded as an individual, is both by birth and education a thought entering upon the threshold of the consciousness of God. At death, he simply sinks below that threshold, but he does not perish. He remains a part of eternity, just as all thought endures in its consequences.

"When I combine a number of such individuals or thoughts and term them a nation, the genius of that nation enters upon the threshold of such consciousness as soon as the nation begins to have a history of its own.

"Combining the nations into a whole, we have mankind or the totality of thought, the consciousness of God and of the world.

"I have often felt giddy at the mere thought of standing firm and secure, on the highest pinnacle of thought.

"May these thoughts inspire and deliver me in the hour of dissolution. There is no separation of mortal and immortal life, they flow into each other and are one.

"The knowledge that we are one and the same with God and the universe is the highest bliss. He who possess this, never dies, but lives the life eternal.

"Come to me once more, thou spirit of Truth, at the moment when I sink—

"Dust cleaves to my wings, just as it does to yonder lark, winging its flight from the furrowed field into ether. The furrow is as pure as the ether, the worm as pure as the lark,—God yet dwells in that which, to us seems lost and ruined. And should my eye be dimmed in death—I have beheld the Eternal One—My eyes have penetrated eternity. Free from distortion and self-destruction, the immortal spirit soars aloft—"

When Gunther had read thus far, Eberhard laid his hand on his lips as if to silence him, and gazed intently into his eyes.

"You have honestly wrestled with yourself and the highest ideas," said Gunther, whose voice was tremulous with something more than grief at approaching death.

Eberhard closed his eyes. When Gunther saw that he was asleep, he rose from his seat.

He now noticed that Irma had been sitting behind the bed-screen. He beckoned to her, and she left the room with him.

"Did you hear everything?" asked Gunther.

"I only came a few minutes ago." Irma wanted to know the whole truth in regard to her father's position. Gunther admitted that there was no hope of recovery, but that the hour of death was uncertain. Irma covered her face with both hands and returned to the sick-room, where she again took her seat behind the bed-screen.

Bruno was with the country physician, in the great hall. As soon as Gunther entered, Bruno hastily arose and, advancing to meet him, hurriedly said: "Our friend here has already quieted me. The danger, thank God"—his tongue faltered at the words "thank God"—"is not imminent. Pray quiet my sister's fears."

Gunther made no reply. He saw that Bruno merely affected ignorance of the imminent danger, and Gunther was enough of a courtier to refrain from forcing the truth upon unwilling ears. He returned to Irma. Bruno followed him and endeavored to cheer his sister; but she shook her head incredulously. He paid no heed to this, but said that he wanted to gain strength and endurance for the sad trial that awaited them. What he really wanted was to ride out, so that he might be absent at the terrible moment. Since his presence could not make things any better, why should he expose himself to such a shock?

The morning began to dawn. The sick man still lay there, motionless.

"His breathing is easier," faintly whispered Irma.

A gentle, reassuring nod was Gunther's reply.

CHAPTER V.

WITH a firm tread, Bruno went down the steps. He had ordered the groom to lead his horse some distance from the castle and there await him.

"If there only were no such thing as dying," thought he to himself. While placing his foot in the stirrup, something tugged at his coat. Was it his father's hand? or was it a spirit-hand dragging him back? He stumbled; his coat had caught in a buckle. He loosened it, and was

just about to lift his riding-whip against the careless groom, when it occurred to him that such behavior was ill-timed. His father was ill, seriously ill, indeed, in spite of the family physician's reassuring words. No, it would not do to punish the servant now; it should not be said that Bruno had beaten his groom at such a moment. Fitz, who was putting the buckle to rights, stooped as if he already felt the whipstock across his shoulders, and looked up amazed when his master, in the gentlest voice, said to him: "Yes, good Fitz, I see that you've not slept any more than I have, and you're quite nervous. Lie down and rest for another hour. You need not ride out with me. Keep your horse saddled, however. I shall take the straight road through the forest clearing and, if anything should happen here, you or Anton can ride after me. At the foot of the Chamois hill, I shall turn back into the bridle-path and return by way of the valley. Do you hear? Don't forget! And now you can go sleep awhile; but don't unsaddle your horse. Don't forget what I've told you."

Bruno rode off, and the astonished Fitz stood there looking after him for some time.

Bruno took the road that led to the woods, and in the direction of a clearing which was now used as a pasture. It was easy riding over the grassy path, and the morning breezes refreshed him.

The golden glow of morning trembled on every leaf, and sparkled on every dewdrop. The woods on either side were superb, and, with a self-complacent nod, Bruno said to himself: "How well he understood forest matters. No, I shan't be so cruel. I shall have the woods well looked after, and shall not cut down the timber."

He now reached a level stretch of road. He put spurs to his horse and set off at a gallop. Suddenly he halted, for the neighborhood was one with which he was not familiar. There had formerly been a swamp and now there were broad fields, on which lay many sheaves of ripened grain.

Bruno turned towards the laborers who were binding the sheaves. The foreman told the young master that it was his father who had drained the swamp, and that this

was now some of the best land on the whole estate. Offering Bruno a handful of the ripened ears, he said: "Take these to your father; I'm sure he thinks of us on his sick-bed."

Bruno declined them, and gave the foreman some drink money. He rode off, leaving word that he was going toward the Chamois hill, and instructing the foreman to tell his groom as much, in case he should come after him.

The farm laborers he had left behind him were driving home with the first crop gathered from the redeemed land, and the cracking of their whips was the only sound that broke upon the silence of the forest solitude. He checked his horse's pace to a walk and, as no one could see him there, lit a cigar. When he reached the high level ground, he started off at a brisk trot. Sheep were grazing here, and Bruno did not fail to ride up to the shepherd and tell him what to say to the groom in case he should follow. It was a comfort to know that he had made it so easy to find him. After he had passed, he turned involuntarily. As if to calm himself he patted his horse's neck and, drawing a tight rein, drew himself up in his saddle. The road again led through a clearing in the forest; the valley below was bathed in golden sunshine. Suddenly it occurred to him: "There are so many miserable beings whose constant care is how to manage to keep alive. Why can't one purchase their vital power and, adding their years to his own, live forever? The masses, stupid as they are, are right when they consider us as no better than themselves, for we must die of the same diseases they are subject to.—Here, all is life; tree and beast and man. There, in the castle, lies a man whose end is drawing near, and who may be dying at this very moment. Perhaps even now, the air is wafting his last breath toward me—Where is it? Why does not a shudder pass through all that belongs to him? through every tree, and man, and beast? All that lived with him should die with him, for it is his. This wretched, miserable life—"

"I'm a poor woman, give me something," said a figure, suddenly emerging from the thicket. It was Zenza.

Bruno started as if a ghost had appeared to him. He put spurs to his horse and hurried off. His hair stood on

end with fright, and it was long before he regained his composure.

In spite of this interruption, and without an effort on his part, his thoughts went back to the subject that engaged them at the moment when Zenza appeared upon the scene; but the old woman's cry of: "Give me something," was ever ringing in his ears. If everything were to die with its possessor, who would inherit? What is more peculiarly a man's own than his thoughts? And even they die with him—

"I won't think any more," said Bruno to himself. "Not now; to-morrow—the day after—some other time; but now I don't want to think."

He raised his hat, as if to permit his thoughts to escape; then he whipped and spurred his horse so that it reared and started off at a furious pace. The effort to maintain himself in his saddle drove what he regarded as gloomy fancies from his mind. He sat firmly, pressed his knees against the horse's ribs, and felt the better for the exertion. But, in spite of all, his thoughts would suddenly wander off to his father again. He felt a sudden shudder—This must have been the very moment—at that instant, his father must have breathed his last—involuntarily, Bruno drew his hand back. His horse halted. He again put spurs to him, and galloped away as if to escape from his thoughts. Suddenly, a voice cried out:

"Stop, Bruno!" He shuddered. Whose voice could it be? Who would call him by name? Surprise and alarm had thrown him into a cold sweat.

"Who calls me?" he asked with pale, trembling lips.

"You can't get here."

"Who are you? Where are you?" cried Bruno. A cold shudder passed over him, and his horse snorted and snuffed the air. Was it true that witches lived in rocks? for the voice had come from the rock.

"Who are you?" repeated Bruno; "your voice seems—"

"Do you still know Black Esther? Turn back, or you're a dead man."

He heard something whizzing by him. Benumbed

with terror, he sat upon his horse. At last he dropped the rein, looked at his hand, drew off his glove, as if to satisfy himself that he was still living, that it was yet day, that all was not a dream, or the product of wild imagination—

His horse went on at a gentle pace. Suddenly, it started to one side—there had been the report of a gun. Who could be hunting there?

Bruno had already gotten beyond the limits of his own domain. Who could now be hunting in the royal forests, where the chase was not to begin until next month?

With a complacent air, Bruno twirled his mustache. He again felt confidence in himself, and in his worldly wisdom. He felt for the revolver in his saddle-bag, and calmly examined it to see if it was fit for use. The horse went on. Presently he saw a gun-barrel resting on a tree and directed against him, while a voice from behind the tree called out:

“Turn back, or you’re a dead man. One—two—three—”

Trembling from head to foot, Bruno turned his horse’s head. Behind him was the loaded gun, and, at any moment, a bullet might pierce him. The cold sweat streamed down his face; his eyes burned; he did not venture to raise his hand, lest the poacher behind him should misinterpret the movement and shoot him in the back. It was not until he had reached the rock where Black Esther had called to him and had so mysteriously disappeared, that he ventured to breathe freely. She had not forgotten his love, and he would henceforth provide for her. He again put spurs to his horse, and hurried off without knowing whither. It was not until he reached tilled land and saw laborers at work, that he alighted and sat down on the ground.

The first feeling of safety inspired him with a good resolve. He would return and, bowing himself in repentance, ask his father’s forgiveness. He would now promise to care for Black Esther, who had been the cause of the rupture between them. But he felt so weak that he could not rise, and a voice within him said: “You can’t do it, you can’t stand two such shocks in one day, and,

besides, there's no hurry; the end will surely not come to-day. There will be time enough to-morrow, or later."

Feeling as if every bone in his body were broken, he, at last, arose, and asked the people in the field where he was. He found that he was far away from the road.

If the groom were now to ride after him and not find him.

Bruno quieted his conscience with the knowledge that he had not meant it to be thus. Dire fate, and an almost inconceivable combination of terrors, had led him from the right road.

Here, no one knew him. Suddenly, he heard the sounds of music and saw several carriages, decorated with green boughs, driving along the road. "What's this? a wedding?" he inquired of the peasant who had already given him some information as to the road.

"I don't know, but I think they must be town folk, or else they couldn't ride about in harvest time. Maybe they're coming from the election."

Bruno again mounted his horse. When he asked for the nearest road to Wildenort, the peasant looked at him in surprise, and pointed to a bridle-path on which he could not miss his way. But Bruno, who had lost all taste for the woods, preferred keeping to the highway. He passed a long string of wagons preceded by a band of music with a flag of black, red, and gold. He hurried by them, for he was not in a mood to listen to music.

CHAPTER VI.

EVEN before Gunther's arrival, Eberhard had been bled. Gunther had brought a small medicine-chest with him, and had hastily compounded some remedies which had relieved and quieted the patient. He was now sleeping. Great drops of perspiration stood on his brow. Irma still sat concealed behind the screen. She could see her father, but could not be seen by him. Drawing a deep breath, he awoke and looked about him. Irma hastened to him. He gazed at her fixedly, and then motioned her to open the window.

The day was bright and sunny; the cool, brimmy breezes wafted the fragrance of the woods into the room. The cracking of whips was heard. Eberhard's features acquired a pleased expression, for he knew that they were now bringing in the first sheaves from the swamp which he had redeemed.

Steps were heard in the ante-chamber, and Gunther came in, accompanied by the farm bailiff.

"Come in," said he, "it will please your master."

With a heavy tread, the bailiff walked up to the sick man's bedside. In his right hand he held some of the ripened grain, while, with his left, he beat his breast as if to force out the words:

"Master, I've brought you the first ears from our new field, and hope your health may be spared, so that you may eat the bread from it for many a year to come."

Eberhard seized the ears and, with his other hand, pressed that of the servant, who now left the room and went down to the barn, where he sat down on a sheaf and wept.

"Shall I remain with you, or would you rather be alone with your child?" asked Gunther.

Eberhard dropped the ears, and they lay upon the coverlet. He reached for Irma's hand. Gunther went out.

And now Eberhard dropped his daughter's hand, pointed to her heart and then to the ears of corn.

She shook her head and said: "Father, I don't understand you."

An expression of pain passed over Eberhard's features, and he placed his finger on his lips, as if grieved that he could not speak. Who knows but what he meant to say: "Good seed will grow from the swamp, if we rightly cultivate it; and out of your own heart, too, my child; out of your lost, ruined—"

"I'll call Gunther," said Irma; "perhaps he will understand what you mean."

Eberhard shook his head, as if in disapproval. His features betrayed something like anger at Irma's inability to understand him.

He bit his speechless lips and tried to raise himself.

Irma assisted him, and he now sat up, supported by the pillows.

His face had changed. It had suddenly acquired a strange hue and an altered expression.

With a shudder, Irma realized what was taking place. She fell down by his bedside, and laid her cheek upon her father's hand. He drew his hand away.

She looked at him. With great effort he raised his hand—it was damp with the dews of death—and with outstretched finger he wrote a word upon her brow. It was a short word; but she saw, she heard, she read it. It was written in the air, on her forehead, in her brain,—aye, in her very soul. Uttering a piercing cry, she sank to the floor.

Gunther came in hurriedly. Stepping over Irma, he rushed to the bedside, lifted Eberhard's fallen hand, felt for the beating of his heart, started back—and then closed his friend's eyes.

The silence of death reigned in the room.

Suddenly, music was heard in front of the house. They were playing the melody of a national song and hundreds of voices called out: "Long live our representative, noble Count Eberhard!" Irma, who was still lying on the ground, moved at these sounds. Gunther strode past her and went out into the courtyard. The playing ceased and the voices were silenced.

Horse's steps were heard approaching, and Bruno entered the courtyard. He alighted. The sorrowful mien of Gunther and those about him, told him what had happened. He covered his face and leaned on Gunther, who led him into the house. When Gunther and Bruno entered the chamber of death, Irma had disappeared. She had shut herself up in her room.

CHAPTER VII.

HE who destroys his life, destroys more than his own life.

The child that has afflicted a father sees his upbraiding hand rise from the grave.

My father has put the mark of Cain upon my brow; a mark that can never be effaced.

Nevermore dare I look upon my face or permit the eyes of strangers to behold it.

Can I escape from myself? My thoughts will follow me everywhere.

I am an outcast, forlorn, ruined.

Such was the dreary monotone that rang through Irma's soul, again and again.

She lay in the darkened chamber from which every ray of light was excluded. She was alone with herself and darkness. Her thoughts were like strange voices, calling her now here, now there. And it often seemed to her as if, with finger pointed at her, her father's fiery hand shone through the darkness.

She could hear Bruno's voice and Gunther's. Bruno wanted to ask her about many things, and Gunther wished to return to the city. Irma answered that she could see no one, and charged Gunther with a thousand greetings to all who loved her. Gunther cautioned the family doctor and the maid to keep a careful watch on Irma, and also sent a messenger to Emma at the convent.

Irma remained in darkness and solitude.

The tempter came to her, and said:

"Why grieve yourself to death? You are young, and the world, with all its beauty and splendor, lies before you. There is not the faintest trace of a mark upon your brow. The hand that left it is cold and stiff in death. Rise up and be yourself again! The whole world is yours! Why pine away? Why mortify yourself? Everything lives for itself; everything lives out its allotted time. Your father completed his life; do you complete yours. What is sin? The dead have no claims on the living; the living alone have rights."

While distracted by grief and doubts, she suddenly saw, arising through the darkness, the vision described in the New Testament, of Satan and the angel contending for the possession of the body of Moses.

"I'm not a corpse!" exclaimed she suddenly. "There are neither angels nor devils. It is all false! In song and story, and from generation to generation, they've

been handing down all sorts of fables, just as they do with children whom they lull to sleep in the dark.

"Day has dawned. I can draw the curtain aside, and the whole world of light is mine. Are there not thousands who have erred as I have, and who still live happily?"

She felt as if buried alive in the earth. Fancy ever transported her to that one grave. She rushed to the window.

"Light! I must have light!"

She raised the curtain. A broad ray of light streamed into the room. She sprang back, the curtain fell and she again lay in darkness.

But she soon heard a voice that went to her heart. Colonel Bronnen had come from the capital to pay the last honors to Eberhard. He begged Irma—his powerful voice was thick with emotion—to permit him to mourn with her for the dead.

All her blood seemed to flow back to her heart. She opened the door and, through the darkness, held out her hand to her friend. He pressed it to his lips, and she heard the strong man weep. Suddenly, the thought flashed upon her that this man could save her, and that she could serve him, and look up to him. But how, could she dare?

"I thank you," said she, at last. "May it ever make you happy to know that you've been kind to the departed and to myself—"

Her voice faltered; she could say no more.

Bronnen departed, leaving her in the dark.

Irma was again alone.

The last stay left her was broken. Had she imagined that Bronnen had picked up fragments of a torn letter which he had found on the road, and that they were now in his pocket, she would have cried out for very shame.

One idea constantly possessed her. What good would it do her to see the sun rise so many thousand times more? Every eye would make the writing stand out more clearly, and certain words had become undying torments to her. Father—daughter! Who would banish these words from the language, so that he might nevermore hear them, nevermore read them?

Her ideas seemed to move in an unfathomable void. Turn it as she might, the one and only thought was ever returning with crushing weight. It seemed exhausting and yet inexhaustible.

Then ensued that numbness of the mind which is best described as the entire absence of thought. Chaos reigned, and what lay beyond surpassed conception. "Let what will come, I shall submit, like the beast led out for the sacrifice, and upon whose head the uplifted axe of the high priest is about to descend. Your destiny must be accomplished; you can do nothing but submit without shrinking."

Irma lay thus for hours.

The great clock in the hall was ticking, and seemed to be saying: Father—daughter; daughter—father. For hours, she could hear nothing but the pendulum, which seemed to utter those words again and again. She was about to give orders that the clock should be stopped, but forebore. She tried to force herself not to hear these words, but did not succeed. The pendulum still kept saying: Father—daughter; daughter—father.

What had once been subject to her caprice, now ruled her.

"What have you seen of the world?" she asked herself. "A mere corner. You must travel round the earth, and let it be a pilgrimage in which you may escape from yourself. You must become acquainted with the whole planet on which these creatures who call themselves men creep about; creatures who dig and plant, preach and sing, chisel and paint, simply to drown the thought that death awaits them all. All is drowned in stupor—"

In imagination, she transported herself far, far away, with faithful servants pitching their tent in the desert; and if some wild race were to approach—While she lay there, half awake, half asleep, she heard the sounds of the tom-tom, and fancied herself borne away on the shoulders of others, and adorned with peacocks' wings, while savage, dusky forms were dancing around her.

What had once been a wild day-dream now possessed her, and her brain whirled in fancy's maddening dance.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was late at night. All were asleep.

Irma gently opened the door and slipped out.

She went to the chamber of death. A single light had been placed near the head of the corpse, which lay in an open coffin and with a few ears of corn in its hands. A servant who was watching by the corpse, looked at Irma with surprise. He bowed to her, but did not speak a word. Irma grasped her father's hand. If that hand had rested on her head to bless her, instead of—

She knelt down and, with burning lips, kissed the cold, icy hand. A distracting thought flashed through her mind: This is the kiss of eternity. Burning flame and icy coldness had met: this is the kiss of eternity.

When she awoke in her room, she knew not whether he had really kissed her dead father's hand or whether it was all a dream. But she did feel that her heart was oppressed by a burden that could never be cast aside.

The kiss of eternity. You shall nevermore kiss warm, loving lips—you are the bride of death.

She heard the bells tolling while they bore her father to the grave. She did not leave her room. Not a sound escaped her lips; not a tear fell from her eye; all her faculties were benumbed and shattered. She lay in the dark. When she heard the pigeons on the window-sill outside, cooing and flying away, she knew that it was day.

Bruno was greatly annoyed by his sister's eccentric behavior. He wanted to leave, and wished her either to accompany him or, at all events, say what she proposed doing. But, thus far, she had not replied. At length, equipped for the journey, he went into Irma's anteroom, where he found her maid reading a book.

Bruno had just stretched out his hand to pat her under the chin, when he suddenly remembered that he was in mourning, and drew his hand back.

He gave his hat to the maid, so that she might put a mourning band on it, and, while doing so, stroked her hand, as if by accident. Then he went to his sister's door again.

"Irma!" he said; "Irma, be sensible; do give me an answer."

"What do you want of me?"

"Open the door."

"I can hear you," she replied, but did not open the door.

"Well, then, I must tell you that no will has been found. I shall arrange everything with you in a brotherly manner. Won't you come along to my house?"

"No."

"Then I must go without you! good-by!" He received no answer and, while waiting, heard steps moving away from the door. He turned toward the waiting-maid, who had in the mean while fastened the crape upon his hat. Bruno kissed her hand and gave her a handsome present.

He set out on his journey at once.

He was just as well pleased to travel without Irma's company. There would be no one to disturb him, and he could more easily give way to his own inclinations. His philosophy enjoined upon him the avoidance of all unnecessary grief; it could do no good, and would simply embitter life.

He was in a self-complacent mood. He meant to take the Wildenort estate to himself, on account of the name. It was, unfortunately, small and, unless he obtained a position under the government, it would not support him in a manner befitting his rank. If Irma should marry, which he hoped would be very soon, he would give her the assessed value of the hereditary estate as her dowry. Bruno returned to the capital, and the first time that he left his house was to visit the jockey club, which was now in session. By paying a moderate forfeit, he hoped to be able to withdraw his horses from the races which were announced to take place within a few days. He was in mourning, and they would, of course, take that into consideration. On the way, he met Gunther and turned back. The doctor was going to the palace.

Never had this man, who, at court, was looked upon as a stoic, shown such agitation as when he brought the news of old Count Wildenort's death.

He told the queen that Eberhard's last moments had renewed the spirit of his better days, and yet he could not refrain from adding that his departed friend had not attained the high point to gain which he had so honestly labored. For, at the last moment he had felt the need of support from without, and was obliged to impress his mind anew with truths he had long since made his own. The queen was astonished at the doctor, who could judge so sternly, even when most deeply afflicted.

"How does our Irma bear it?" cried she.

"Sadly and silently," replied Gunther.

"I think," said the king to the queen, "that we ought to write to our friend, and send a messenger to her."

The queen approved of his suggestion, and the king said to the captain of the palace guard:

"The queen wishes to have a courier sent to Countess Irma at once. Pray attend to the matter. Send Baum."

The queen started with fear. Why had the king said that *she* desired to send a messenger? The suggestion had been his own, and she had merely assented to it. She quickly silenced her doubts, however, and reproached herself that the suspicions she had once harbored had not yet entirely vanished. She went to her room and wrote to Irma. The king wrote, too.

Baum assumed a modest and submissive mien, while receiving orders to start at once as a courier to the Countess of Wildenort. He was to remain with the countess, to be in constant attendance upon her, and, if she desired to travel, he was to accompany her until she should return to court.

When Baum set out with the letters, his face wore a triumphant expression. He was now on the point of gaining the great prize. He had been intrusted with a delicate commission, and he knew what he was about. He felt that they appreciated him, and that he understood them. He looked back toward the palace. The submissive air had vanished. Stroking his chest with his right hand, and holding the left up to his lips, he said to himself; "I shall return as a made man; I shall be lord chamberlain at least."

Baum arrived at the manor-house. The maid told him that Irma would receive no one.

"If she only had a good cry; her silent grief will kill her."

He knocked at Irma's door. It was long before an answer came. At last she asked what was the matter, and when she recognized Baum's voice, she was obliged to support herself from falling, by holding on to the latch of the door. "Had the king come, too?" she asked herself.

Baum said that he had come as a courier to deliver a letter from their majesties. Irma opened the door just far enough to enable her to put out her hand. She took the large letter and laid it on the table. There was nothing that she cared to learn from the world, nor could it offer her any consolation. No one could. At last, toward evening, she drew back the curtains and broke the seal of the large envelope. There were two letters in it; one in the queen's handwriting, the other in the king's. She opened the queen's letter first, and read:

"My dear, good Irma":

(It was the first time that the queen had written so affectionately. Irma wiped her face with her handkerchief and went on reading.)

"You have experienced life's greatest affliction. Would that I were with you, to press your throbbing heart to mine, and to kiss away your tears. I shall not attempt to console you, but can only say that I sympathize with you as far as it is possible to sympathize with griefs one has not yet known. You are strong and noble, and I cannot help appealing to you" (Irma's hand trembled) "to think of yourself and to bear your grief purely and nobly. You are orphaned, but the world must not be a desert void to you. There are still hearts that beat with friendship for you. I am glad—that is to say—I thank fate that I am able to be of some help to you in your sorrow. I need not assure you of my friendship for you, and yet, at such moments, it does one good to tell one's self so. I do not care to spend a single hour in pleasure while you are in affliction. All feelings are shared by us." (Irma covered her face with

her hands. Recovering herself, she went on reading.) "Let me know soon what I can do for you. Come to me, or remain in solitude, just as your feelings dictate. If I could only enable you to enjoy the company of yourself as we enjoy it. You don't know how much good you've done me. You have extended the domain of our perceptions and have thus enriched our lives. What nobler achievement can there be! Remain firm and remember that you may always depend upon the friendship of

• "Your ever loving

"MATHILDE."

Irma laid the letter on the table and involuntarily pushed it far away from that of the king, which was still unopened. Years should elapse—aye, oceans should lie between the reading of the two letters; and yet how often had she listened to them both in the same breath, and looked at them with the same glance.

With a violent movement, as if in anger, she opened the king's letter and read:

"I am deeply pained to know that you, too, my charming friend, must learn that we are mortal. It grieves me to think that your lovely eyes must weep. If that which is noblest be capable of still further purification—and what mortal being is not?—this affliction must needs add to your noble-mindedness. I entreat you, do not soar too high, lest you leave us too far below you. Carry us with you, to the lofty regions in which you dwell."

Irma's features assumed a hard and bitter expression. She went on reading:

"If you mean to torment your beautiful eyes with tears, and your noble heart with sighs, for more than seven days, and desire to remain alone, pray send me word. Should you, however, wish to protract your mourning, and to recover yourself and another self, by travel, decide upon what direction you mean to take. Let it not be too far—not too far into the land of sorrow, a land to which you are a stranger. Be happy again and subdue your grief, cheerfully and speedily.

"Affectionately yours,

K."

In the letter, there lay a small piece of paper with the inscription: "Burn this as soon as read."

"I cannot live without you. If I lose you, I lose myself. Your presence is my life. I cannot live, except in the light of your eyes. I want no clouds; I long for the sunlight. Remember the world of thought that dwells beneath your plumed hat. Let that world have its sway. you must not be sad; you dare not, for my sake. You must be mistress of your grief, just as you are mistress over me. Be firm, put all grief away from you, and return to your

KURT.

"The kiss of eternity! I alone can kiss away the sadness that clouds your brow. I can and I will."

Irma uttered a loud shriek, and then gave way to convulsive laughter.

"Can any lips kiss this brow? How would they relish the death-sweat which has already eaten into the flesh? How would that terrible word taste to the lips? Kiss it away! Kiss it away! I burn! I freeze!"

The maid heard the last few words, and endeavored to go to Irma's assistance, but the door was locked.

After some time, Irma raised her head and was surprised to find herself on the floor. She rose and ordered a light and writing materials. She burned the king's two letters, and then sat there for a while, with her weary head resting upon both her hands. At last she took the pen and wrote:

"Queen!

"I expiate my crime, in death. Forgive and forget.
"IRMA."

On the envelope she wrote the words, "By the hand of Gunther," "For the queen herself."

Then she took another sheet and wrote:

"My Friend:

"These are the last words I shall ever address to you. We are treading the wrong path, a path full of peril. I expiate my crime. You do not belong to yourself alone; you belong to her and to your country. Death is my expiation. Life must be yours. Be at one with the law

that binds you to her and to the state. You have denied both, and I have aided you to do so. Our life, our love, has dealt terribly with you. You could no longer be true to yourself. But now you must again become so; and that completely. These are my dying words, and I shall gladly die, if you will but hearken to me and to your better self. God knows we did not mean to sin; but we sinned, for all. My judgment is written on my brow; inscribe yours in your heart and live anew. All is still yours. I receive the kiss of eternity from death. Listen to this voice and forget it not, but forget her who calls to you. I do not wish to be remembered."

She sealed the letters and hurriedly hid them in the portfolio, for she was interrupted. Emma, or rather Sister Euphrosyne, was announced.

CHAPTER IX.

GUNTHER had sent a messenger to inform Emma of Count Eberhard's death and Irma's despair. The prioress suggested that Emma should hasten to her young friend, to whom they owed so great a debt; and, as nuns were not allowed to travel alone, she was accompanied by a sister who was an experienced nun.

When the maid announced them, Irma started from her seat. This is deliverance! In the convent, shut out from the world, a living death—there shall you wait until they bear you to the grave.

Suddenly the old boatman's words flashed upon her: "A life in which nothing happens."

Her lips swelled with proud defiance. I shall not wait for the end; I'll force it. It was long before she answered the maid:

"My best thanks, but I don't care to see or hear any one."

After uttering these words, Irma felt as if inspired with new strength. That, too, was over.

All was silence and darkness again, and the clock kept on saying: Father—daughter; daughter—father.

From the valley below, she heard the sounds of the vesper bell.

"It must be," said Irma to herself. She drew back the curtains and, looking down into the valley, could see the nuns, clad in their long black gowns, walking across the meadows. Her thoughts went out after them, as she said: "Farewell, Emma!" Then she called her maid and told her to give orders that a horse should be saddled for her, as she wished to ride out. She did not turn her face to the maid. No one should ever look on that brow. The maid helped her on with her riding-habit and riding-hat, the latter ornamented with part of an eagle's wing. Irma started when her hand touched the wing. The king had shot the bird, and had given her the plumes when— It seemed like a parting, ghostly touch.

She ordered a double veil to be put on her hat, and it was not until she was in perfect disguise, that she set off. She did not look up; she took leave of no one; her eyes were fixed on the ground.

Irma's saddle-horse stood in the courtyard. At her approach, it pawed the ground and snuffed the air. She did not stop to inquire who had brought her horse from the city. She patted its neck and called it by its name: "Pluto." In thought, she was already so far removed from the world that she regarded the beast as a marvel, or as something never before seen. She mounted.

The large dog, a favorite of her father's, was there also, and barked when he saw her. She gave orders to have the dog taken back to the house.

She rode away at an easy pace. She did not look behind her, nor to the right or left. The sun was already behind the tops of the trees. Its broken rays shone through the branches, like so many threads of light, and between the boughs glowed the sky, forming a golden background.

Irma halted and beckoned to Baum, who had been following her, to come nearer. He rode up.

"How much money have you with you?"

"Only a few florins."

"I must have a hundred florins; ride back and get them for me."

Baum hesitated. He wanted to say that he was not allowed to leave the countess, but he could not muster courage enough to do so.

"Why do you hesitate? Don't you understand me?" said Irma harshly. "Ride back immediately."

Baum was scarcely out of sight, when Irma whipped her horse, leaped over the ditch at the side of the road, hurried across the mountain meadow and into the woods. She rode at full gallop, over the very road Bruno had taken a few days before. The horse was spirited and fresh, and proud of its beautiful rider. They knew each other, and it galloped on right merrily, as if in the chase. And there really is a chase; for hark! there's a shot. But Pluto stands fire, and is not so easily frightened. Away he dashed, more wildly than before. The rays of the setting sun shone through the forest shades, lighting up the trees and mosses with their roseate glow. And still she rode on, ever urging her horse to greater speed.

She had reached the crest of the mountain ridge; below, lay the broad lake, glowing with purple.

"There!" cried Irma. "There thou art, cold death!"

Pluto stopped, thinking that his mistress had spoken to him. "You're right," said she, patting his neck; "it's far enough."

She alighted and turned the horse's head. He looked at her once more, with his large, faithful eyes, for she had thrown back her veil.

"Go home. You're to live; go home!"

The horse did not move. She raised her whip and struck it. It started off, with mane and tail fluttering in the evening breeze, as it hurried away along the mountain crest.

Irma paused and looked after it. Then she sat down on the edge of a projecting rock and gazed at the vast prospect and the setting sun.

"O light! O lovely sky! This is the last time I gaze upon you, before I sink into the night of death—"

For a moment, she was wholly absorbed in the view that opened before her. She no longer knew whence she had come, or whither she would go. Her eyes rested on the vast range of towering peaks, summit piled on sum-

mit, and, in the distance, a peak overtopping them all. The wooded heights seemed enveloped in a violet haze. The trembling rays of the setting sun gilded the bare and rugged cliffs. High upon the glaciers rested the rosy glow of sunset, ever assuming a brighter hue as it grew darker in the valley below. One mighty, snow-clad peak seemed as if on fire; but a cloud passed over it and, as if lifting a veil, carried the mountain's rosy glow with it. The cloud gradually disappeared in a blaze of glory, and the snowy peaks, standing out against the background of dull sky, looked cold and bleak, as if in death.

The mighty spirit of Death was passing o'er the heights.

Oh! that one might thus vanish into thin air!

A chilling breeze swept over the mountain. Irma shuddered. She passed her hand over her face, and felt that she, too, was growing pale. She rose to her feet and ascended the mountain for some distance, so that she might once more see the fiery ball. She was too late and said aloud:

"Of what avail is it to see the sun a thousand, or twice a thousand times, as long as the day must come when it sets for us, once and for all? And it has forever set to him who lies under the sod and on whose hand decay—

She felt giddy and sank upon the mossy ground. When she got up again, it was night.

She arose and, holding up her dress, walked down into the dark and thickly wooded ravine below.

CHAPTER X.

IRMA advanced with a firm step. The footpath she had struck wound its way among large and lofty trees and soon opened into a broad road that had been cut through the forest. Ever and anon heat-lightning would flash in the distance, breaking up the gloom and revealing another firmament that lay beyond.

Irma scarcely looked up. She thought of nothing but how to find her way. There was perfect silence, broken now and then by a sorrowful sound, like the sobbing of a human being. It must be from some hollow tree,

thought she. The groaning always seemed to advanced before her. Wherever she went she heard it. She looked for the heart-sick tree, but could not find it. With every step, she advanced further into the forest and higher up the mountain. Then she ran down the mountain, and now all was silent. The path was no longer visible, but, from afar, she caught a glimpse of the moonlit lake, the object of her search. She went on, through the pathless forest, treading down the soft moss. Sometimes she heard the twittering of birds in the tree-tops; a martin or a weasel was destroying the young in their nests. The world is full of murder, thought she; its creatures are ever preying on each other. Though man destroys and kills his fellow-men, he does not eat them. That alone distinguishes man from the beasts. And there is one thing more—man alone can kill himself. Irma grew dizzy at the thought. She supported herself against a tree for a moment and then walked on. Her resolve must be carried out; there must be no weakness, no wavering. She went still further into the dense forest. Her cheeks glowed, the perspiration dripped from her forehead; but inwardly she felt as if freezing.

Something rustled through the the thicket. It was a stag which she had frightened from its cover. The stag was afraid of her, and she was afraid of the stag. He fancied that she could feel its antlers piercing her. She hurried down the mountain side. For a while she could still hear the crackling of the underbrush, and at last all was silent again. The wind whistled through the tree-tops, and there was a sound of running water, sometimes near and sometimes afar, and then the roaring of a forest stream dashing down from the rocks. She beheld the moonlit foam, and no longer knew where she was or whither she was going—toward the lake, or away from it. If she were to lose her way in the forest—if she were to be found there and taken back to the world and misery! Mustering all her strength, she walked on. The cool night air blew against her face, but her cheeks glowed as if with fire. She pressed her hand to her brow; it seemed as if a hot spring was flowing from the spot which had been touched. She looked up to the stars and recognized

the familiar constellations. She knew their position, but those great guides through infinite space do not help the lonely mortal who has lost her way in the heart of the forest. Irma thought of the nights when, under Gunther's guidance, her glance had roamed o'er the vast, starry expanse. But now all was annihilated, all greatness had fallen. Even her view of the stars was confined and obstructed. She tried to remember whether she had destroyed the letters or left them behind her. She thought she could remember having burnt that of the king; but how as to the letter to the queen? Torn by conflicting doubts, she was, at last, completely bewildered. Perhaps both letters would be found.—Be it so.

And then Walpurga's song passed through her mind.

If the good peasant woman who lives by the lake knew that her friend was thus groping her way through the woods, all alone, in darkest night, and with such dread thoughts for her companions—she would hasten to her aid, would draw her to her heart and would not let her go. Who knows but that, although far away, she is thinking of me now, dreaming of me and, perhaps, singing her song—sending it, like some invisible messenger, on the wings of night. How the poor creature will grieve when she hears of my death. Perhaps she will be the only one who will sincerely mourn for me.

Memories of many kinds floated through her mind. Years hence, some boatman like the one at the island convent, will tell the story of the drowned maid of honor. What effect will the news of my death have upon others? None of them can help me, nor can I help them. Day after to-morrow they'll be playing, dancing and singing as usual. No one can keep another in remembrance. He who is absent has no claim on our thoughts. Life is as pitiless as death. She went further into the thicket, passing wild ravines on the way. The stones loosened by her tread tumbled over the precipice, and the dull, hollow thud with which they struck the earth below, told her how far they had fallen. The rocks on either side drew closer together, the mountain torrent rushed down over them and, all at once, she reached the edge of a precipice; further, she could not go. I will take the fatal leap

and dash myself to pieces. But to lie there, perhaps for days, bruised and half dead. To die a lingering death! No!

She sought a path. A branch struck her in the face just where her father's icy finger had touched her.

"No; this brow shall nevermore see the light of day," she cried, holding fast with her hands, while trying to find a way along the edge of the cliff. Suddenly, she heard the loud voice of a woman singing. Irma drew a long breath, for it was a human voice—a woman's, perhaps that of a young and lovely girl, giving her lover a signal in the night. The sounds were repeated again and again, and grew more and more piercing, and, trembling with fear, Irma sat on the rock. She answered with a scream. She was frightened at the sound of her own voice, but she cried out again and again, for now there was an answer. The other voice seemed to approach; dogs rushed forth and were already surrounding Irma and barking, as a signal that they had found the prey. The voice came nearer and nearer.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"Here," answered Irma.

"Where?"

"Here."

"Up there?"

"Yes."

"How did you get up there?"

"I don't know."

"Keep quiet; don't move and I'll come."

"Yes."

Irma waited a long while, and at last some one appeared right below where she was sitting.

"So there you are," said the figure. She threw a rope to Irma, telling her to bind it round her body and then fasten the other end to a rock or tree, and slide down gently.

Irma did as she was bidden. During that one short moment, while she hovered between heaven and earth, a thousand indescribable thoughts passed through her mind. She reached the ground in safety. The woman at once seized her by the hand and led her away. She followed as if without a will of her own. In scrambling through

the bushes and over the rocks, she tore herself until the blood flowed. At last they reached a narrow rocky path. Below them the brook rushed by, but the powerful woman held Irma's hand fast in hers, as if with an iron grip.

"A chamois hunter wouldn't dare go where you've been. Now we're up here, and there's our hut," said she, at last. "It's a wonder you didn't stumble over the rock with your long dress."

"Who are you?" asked Irma.

"Tell me first, who you are, and how you got here."

"I can't tell you that."

"No matter. They call me Black Esther."

"Who are you bringing there?" called out a grim-looking woman, who appeared at the door of the hut. Behind her glowed the fire on the hearth.

"I don't know; it's a woman."

Irma went toward the hut with Black Esther. The old woman crossed herself and exclaimed:

"Let all good spirits praise the Lord! it's the Lady of the Lake—"

"I'm not a spirit," said Irma. "I'm a weary mortal. Let me rest here for a while, and then let your daughter go with me and show me the way to the lake. All I ask for now is a drop of water."

"No, that 'ud be the death of you. You mustn't drink water now. I'll cook some warm soup for you, and bring it to you right off."

She led Irma into the room, and when she saw her hand and the diamond rings sparkling on it, she grinned with delight.

"Oh what a beautiful ring! That's from your sweetheart."

"Take it and keep it," said Irma, holding out her hand.

With great dexterity, the old woman removed the ring from Irma's finger.

"Good heavens!" cried the old woman suddenly, "I've seen you before—yes, yes, it was you. Didn't you once wear a little golden heart and send it to a child? Didn't you once, at the palace, order them to get something to eat for an old woman and have her son set free,

and didn't you give her money besides? Good heavens! you're the—"

"Don't mention my name! Only let me rest a moment; ask me nothing, and say nothing more."

"As you don't want me to, certainly not. I'll hurry and get the soup ready for you."

She went out, leaving Irma alone.

Irma lay on the bed, which was nothing more than a sack of leaves that crackled strangely whenever she turned her head. The leaves seemed to say: "Ah! when we were green, we had a better time of it—" The moon shone in through the window; everything seemed dancing before her eyes; she felt as if she were on the open sea. But she soon fell asleep.—When she awoke, she heard a man's voice.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT on the porch, which also served as a kitchen, were Thomas and his mother. He had removed his false beard, was cleaning his black face, and now said:

"Mother, do you know what I'm sorry for?"

"What for?"

"Why, that I didn't shoot the young count the other day. I won't have as good a chance at him again. I could have shot him through the back of the neck and that would have been the last of him. I'd have given the daylight a chance to shine through him."

"You're a nice fellow to talk repentance."

"Yes, and I'd have done a good deed if I'd shot the fellow. Just think, mother, that's the kind of people the grand folks are who own the forest and all the game in it. Just think of it, mother! I'm a good fellow, after all."

"How so?"

"Only think, mother! Do you know why the count was in the forest? He wanted to be out of the way while his father was dying; and so he rode off and let the old man end his days alone. I promise you, if you were going to die, and I were about, I'd stay with you to the last. I'd deserve to go to heaven, if I'd put that fellow out of the way. If I'd known all about it at the time,

I'd have done it, too. Indeed, I did want to, just for the fun of the thing. But it's great fun to think how the fellow must have shook, to be riding in front of me while I had a ball ready for him and could have shot him at any minute. Oh, you Wildenort!"

At the mention of her family name, Irma fell over as if shot and, with bated breath, listened while Thomas continued:

"Since then, I've been as if bewitched. I haven't chanced across a bit of game and I feel like a fool. Something happened to me about twilight—the devil take it, one can't help believing in spirits. Mother, I saw a beautiful horse, and no one was on it. If it had only been a real horse, one that would fetch money! But I, like a fool, was frightened when it galloped past me, with its flying mane and clattering hoofs. But, before I'd made up my mind that it was a real horse and that ghost stories were stupid stuff—heigho, it was gone."

"Nay, Thomas, take care! There's something in those stories after all. Come, stand here, hold your hand over the fire and swear that you'll keep quiet, and I'll tell you something."

"What do you happen to know?"

"More than your thick head can hold. I tell you there *are* spirits, and the Lady of the Lake is lying on the bed in there."

"Mother, you've gone crazy."

"Take care! she's ordered me to cook some soup for her."

"And so the water-fairies eat soup. I'm not afraid of any creature that eats cooked victuals. I'd like to take a look at the Lady of the Lake."

The old woman tried to keep him back, but he forced his way into the room. When he beheld Irma, he stood still, as if rooted to the spot. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"She's a woman like yourself, only she's much handsomer. If she were the Lady of the Lake, she'd have swan's feet, as far as I know. Mother, who is it?"

"I don't know."

"Then I'll ask her."

The old woman tried to restrain him, but Irma had

already risen to her feet. She looked about her with a vacant stare and opened her lips, but could not speak.

"It's you!" cried Thomas suddenly. "That's splendid."

He wanted to seize her, but Zenza held him back.

"It's you!" he cried again. "You've lost your way and here you are; that's splendid."

"Do you know me?"

"Why, who doesn't know you? you're the king's sweetheart and now you're—"

Irma's loud shriek of despair drowned the last words of the brutal fellow.

"Hurrah!" shouted Thomas. "Out with you, mother; and you, too, Esther. I don't need either of you."

"Let her go! You shan't touch her," cried the mother.

"Shan't I? and who's to hinder me?"

The mother struggled with him, but he hurled her aside. Unable to think of any other expedient, she seized the vessel of boiling broth and swore that she would dash it in his face. He warded it off and staggered back, bellowing like a bull.

Esther rushed up to Irma and hurriedly whispered:

"Come, come! I'll save you, for your father's sake. Come! Away!"

She dragged Irma away with her, and with breathless haste they ran down the hill. Irma was out of breath and wanted to rest. Esther, however, dragged her a little further, until they reached a spring, where they seated themselves. Dipping up some water in her hands, she bathed Irma's brow and her own.

For some time, neither of them spoke a word. At last, Irma asked:

"Do you know the way to the lake?"

"Very well. That's my path, too—the only one left me."

"How? what do you mean?"

"I want to do just what you mean to do, and I suppose I'll have to."

"What do I mean to do?"

"To drown yourself."

Irma started with surprise when she found her purpose known.

"I don't know why," continued Esther, "but I can easily guess. My brother spoke bitter words to you; but, I beg of you, don't do it. Just think of it! You're so beautiful, so young, so rich. You may live for many years, and things may be much better for you in the world. Don't do it.—Hush!" said she, interrupting herself, "don't you hear something? We'll stop talking, so as to hear every sound. He's following us, and won't leave us. Get up! we must be off."

They got up and walked on further through the gloomy forest.

A vision of hell passed through Irma's mind. Through all eternity, the noble and the lowly would be linked to each other and suffer a like fate; for sin, like virtue, knows no such distinctions.

They were passing a wild, roaring stream, when Esther asked:

"So you're his sister?"

"Who's sister?"

"My Bruno's. How goes it with him? I saw him the other day, when I was looking for ants' eggs, but he didn't see me. Is it true that he's married happily?"

"Yes. But why do you call him your Bruno?"

"Well, I'll tell you. You're the first one who's heard his name pass my lips since that day. Has he never mentioned it to you himself?"

"No."

"He can't have forgotten it. Come on! Thomas might find us here. Take my hand and go backward; then the dogs will lose the scent."

Esther took Irma by the hand and led her away. After they had seated themselves under a projecting rock, Black Esther thus told her story:

"My mother knows nothing of it, nor does my brother. No one knows the right story; but I can tell you. This isn't our real home, but we're often here in the summer, looking for gentian, and herbs, and ants' eggs. I was fifteen years old, a merry devil of a girl, and could have run a race with any stag, when your brother found me in

the woods. He was handsome—very handsome. There never was another man in all the world so beautiful as he was. He was so clever and so good, and we loved each other so much; and I cried every time I had to go home to my mother again. I would have liked to stay out in the woods, just as the deer did; and it almost pleased me when I got home and mother gave me a beating, for then I could cry without having to give a reason for it. I longed for him every moment, and never wanted to leave him. He once told me who he was, and that his father was a very stern man, and that, if it weren't for that, he'd take me home to his castle, and make a countess of me. And what do you think I did—I've thought a thousand times since of how foolish I was, but I'm sure I meant no harm. As Bruno had complained so bitterly, I thought this bad father might be brought around; so I went to the castle, and went right up to him and told him that he oughtn't to be so cruel and hard-hearted, and that he ought to allow Bruno to marry me, and I'd surely be a good daughter-in-law, and that there had never, in all the world, been truer love than ours. And your father gave me a glance—I'll never forget his eyes. I can see them before me now, so large and bright. And a little while ago, when Thomas started toward you, you had just such eyes, and that made me take pity on you and help you away."

"Go on," said Irma, after a long pause.

"Ah, yes," replied Esther, collecting her thoughts. "And then your father came toward me. I stooped, for I thought he was going to strike me; but he put his hand on my head and said: 'You're a good child, even if you've done wrong, and it shan't be my fault if you don't keep good.' Then he called a servant and ordered him to go for Bruno. When Bruno came in and saw me, he was frightened; but I said: 'Don't be afraid; you're father's a kind-hearted man, and he'll let me have you for a husband.' Bruno didn't stir from the spot; his face was as white as the cloth on the table he was leaning against. And then your father said: 'Very well, so I'll come to you. You've not acted honorably, but you shall still have a chance to do so. I permit you—nay, I command you—"

to take this child of the forest for your wife—' Bruno laughed—it was a devilish laugh, and I'll never forget it—and your father said: 'Speak, Bruno.' Then he said: 'Father, don't be ridiculous,' and your father's face changed as suddenly as if he had grown thirty years older in that one minute. He could hardly stand, and sat down on a chair. 'What do you say?' he asked. 'Repeat it once more! Speak!' And Bruno repeated his words, twisting his mustache while he spoke. Your father tried to persuade him, and told him that he'd teach me, that I should learn to read, and write, and do everything else, as well as any countess, and that Bruno had better not take a load upon his conscience which he'd never get rid of as long as he lived. And Bruno answered: 'If you don't send that girl away, I'll leave the room. Go, Esther. Leave the room, and don't come again till I send for you.' He said something to your father, in a language I didn't understand. Your father grew pale, came up to me, gave me his hand, and said: 'Go, Esther.' He didn't say another word, but that he said kindly. And so I went away. That was the last time I ever saw Bruno. I heard, afterward, that there had been terrible goings on between your father and him, but I kept out of sight, after that. I didn't want to be the cause of ill-feeling between father and son; I saw that it wouldn't do. Our child meant kindly toward us, for it was born dead. That was far better than to find only misery in the world, and die at last. Don't you think so, too?"

Irma did not answer, but she felt for Esther's hand.

Esther continued:

"Mother and Thomas don't know that I ever knew your brother. But Thomas is a terrible fellow, and he hates your brother just as if he had a notion of it; but I don't say a word. I'm lost; but what does it matter? There's no need of his being ruined too. Oh! how I loved him. I can't forget it, even now."

Esther, who had, thus far, told her story in a calm and quiet tone, suddenly cried out:

"He's got a beautiful, fine, rich, noble wife! Yes, that's all we are here for—so that nothing may happen to you in your silken beds out yonder. Ha! ha! ha! And

when they get a child in wedlock, they get some poor woman to suckle it. Walpurga's well off; her milk's turned to gold. Oh, if I could only stop thinking."

She tore her hair and gritted her teeth. "It's a wonder that the wild and burning thoughts that pass through my brain haven't burned away the stupid black hair long ago. Oh, my head's burning, and I get blows on it every day. But it's hard—just feel—it's as hard as steel."

Irma stood there, as if rooted to the spot.

"Hush!" said Esther. "Hush. I hear the dogs. I told you he'd hunt for us. Fly! fly! There, to the right! that's the path; but, I beg of you, for the sake of everything in the world, don't do it—don't do it. You haven't gone far enough for that. But, be off. Down there you'll come to a small, wooden bridge. Cross it and hurry on. I'll stay here; the dogs will come to me and I'll detain them. You're saved. Away! Away!"

She urged Irma away, and remained behind.

Irma hurried on, alone. She often pressed her hand to her brow. Grateful remembrance of her father had saved her from unspeakable horror. When his hand rested on Esther's head, it had been in token of forgiveness. But the characters he had branded on Irma's brow, told her that he had forever put her away from him. "The brand upon my brow can only be cooled by the waters of the deep lake," she kept saying to herself, while she hurried across the wooden bridge, and then over the rising ground until she again entered the dark forest.

Black Esther stood her ground quietly, and waited for the dogs to approach. She called them, and they ran toward her. She heard Thomas whistling, and the dogs answering. He was still far off, but he was on the right track. She counted every pulsation; for with every heart-beat, Irma was one step further from where her pursuer must halt. She was willing to suffer all. What did it matter?

"Yes, yes; I know you're fond of me," said she to the great wolf-dog, that fawned upon her. "Yes, you're the only creature in this world that loves me. I wish I'd been a dog, too. Why wasn't I born a dog? If it were

only true, as mother says, that there once were times when people were changed into other beings."

Thomas's whistle and cry were again heard. The dogs answered. He drew nearer and soon stood beside her.

"So it's you, is it? I thought as much. Where's the other one?"

"Where you'll never find her."

A cry of pain resounded from the woods.

"Kill me at once!" cried Esther. The dogs howled, but knew not which of the two they would help.

Thomas went off, leaving Esther lying where she had fallen.

CHAPTER XII.

ON the soft moss under the trees near the border of the forest, a beautiful female, clad in blue, lay stretched in sleep. The trembling sunbeams played about her face. She awoke, and, resting her head upon her hand, gazed about her with the air of one to whom all is lost.

The air was laden with the odor of pines, and fresh, cooling breezes were wafted from the lake. The bells of the browsing cattle were heard from the neighboring hills. The dew glistened; every object was radiant with light; but to her, all was night. It was long before she realized that she was awake, or where she was. At last, she became conscious of herself; but still she moved not. Sad and gloomy thoughts passed through her mind. Why awake? Oh, pitiless nature! why cannot the soul's anguish destroy thee? Why is it necessary to use another force—fire, water, steel, or poison—to oppose thee? Why is it that the soul can ruin the body, and yet cannot destroy it? Sun! what dost thou want of me? I want thee no longer! My father's writing burns my brow. Conscience hammers at me, as if with a thousand fists, and yet does not destroy me!—Why is this? Why?

She closed her eyes and turned away from the sun. Something whispered to her: "There's time yet. It may all prove to be a hellish adventure, a waking dream. Turn back! You can, you may. You have fully expiated all."

As if moved by some invisible power, she again turned toward the sun. Below her lay the glittering lake, and its waves seemed to say; "In these depths, all thought, all trouble, all fear, all doubt is at an end."

She arose, and when she saw the impression her figure had made in the moss, she looked at it for a long while. Thus, thought she, does the stag look at his nightly couch when the fatal shot has struck him. Are we better than the hunted beasts of the forest? All is vanity! What use is there in torturing ourselves? One bold plunge will end all. She put on her hat and walked away, alone in the world with the one idea that possessed her. No voice dissuaded her; she was mistress over life and death.

The blackberry bushes caught her dress and held her fast, and, while extricating herself, the thorns scratched her hands and feet.

She felt a sense of gnawing hunger, and wept like a forsaken child.

Tears came to her relief.

Just then, she saw more berries, which she plucked and ate with eager appetite. Startled by her, a bird and its mate flew up from among the blackberry bushes. There was the empty nest. Every creature has its home. Irma stood there for some time, quite forgetting herself. She turned her head,—and, behold! beside the blackberries there were poison berries, belladonna—he who hungers for death can feed on these. Irma did not pluck the deadly fruit. She did not care to die a death of slow torture, perhaps to swoon away, to fall into the hands of men again. No; it must be in the bottomless lake.

Irma now hurried off, as if she had been loitering by the way. The dew moistened her wounded feet; she shivered with cold.

Suddenly the bright sounds of music and the flourish of trumpets were borne upon the breeze. Irma pressed her hand to her brow—it isn't music, it is only the play of my frenzied imagination. The world's pleasures are tempting me, and calling me back with violin, clarionet and trumpet. "Come, soothe yourself with our sounds; be merry and enjoy the days allotted to you." But listen! The sound is heard again, accompanied by the

discharge of cannon, whose reports are echoed back from the mountains, again and again. Perhaps they are celebrating a wedding in some quiet village on yonder shore. A youth and a maiden who have loved each other truly, have to-day become united, and music and cannon call out to the mountains: "Rejoice with us; love's happiness is as eternal as ye are—" Irma walked on, lost in reverie and looking down on the ground. Her thoughts were with the happy ones. In imagination, she saw the glad looks of parents, of comrades, of friends, and heard the priest's benediction; while she walked on through the dewy grass and briars. Her hand was firmly clenched, as if she felt obliged thus to hold fast to the resolve that urged her onward. She walked along by the lake. The shore was flat, a mere reedy swamp. There could be no sudden ending there; only a slow, miserable death. She walked round and round, ran to and fro with hasty step and bated breath. At last she saw a rock extending to the water's edge. It was steep, almost perpendicular. She climbed up to the top, raised her hands, leaned over the edge. But hark! Who called to her from the water? She heard a shriek of anguish, a cry for help, a splash. In her excitement, she dropped her hat. It rolled over the edge of the rock and into the water. She saw a human figure wrestling with the waves. It rose to the surface—it was Black Esther! It rose once more and then sank out of sight. . . . Uttering a wild shriek, Irma sank upon the rock. She had seen the deed she purposed enacted before her very eyes. Her limbs seemed palsied, and she lay there as if at the bottom of the lake. She was conscious, and yet could not raise herself. A voice called within her, but no sound passed her lips.

And while she lay there, she heard voices singing:

" Ah, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee;
And swiftly speed the hours by,
When thou art near to me."

She sprang to her feet. What could it be?

As if impelled by some unseen power, she hurried down from the rock. She wiped the tears from her eyes, and

blood was streaming from her face. Had she been weeping tears of blood? A large boat was approaching. It drew nearer and nearer.

It is Walpurga's voice. It is she who calls. She comes—she recognizes her friend. Irma flees. Walpurga leaps ashore—pursues her—Irma tries to escape—Walpurga at last overtakes her and clasps her in her arms, while Irma falls fainting upon her breast.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE blood was streaming from a wound in Irma's forehead. Walpurga knelt down beside her and, divesting herself of her neckcloth, bound the bleeding brow. She then gathered some wet grass and shook the dew in Irma's face. In despair, she cried:

"Dearest Countess! dear, good, beloved Countess! do wake up! For God's sake, what's the matter? Oh! for God's sake, wake up! Irma! Irma!" Irma opened her eyes.

Hansei's voice was heard calling: "Walpurga! Walpurga, where are you?"

"Is that your husband? Don't let him come here. He must not see me," said Irma.

"Stay there!" cried Walpurga. "Send mother here, and tell her to bring some of the wine along that I brought home with me. It's in the blue chest, with the child's things. Be quick about it!" In a few hurried words, Irma told her that her father was dead, and that she had sought to drown herself in the lake. She put her hand to her brow, and drew it back in alarm.

"Woe's me! How is this?"

"You've been bleeding. You must have fallen and struck your head against a stone. Just look!" said she, forcing herself to assume a cheerful tone; "this is the green kerchief you sent my child."

Irma tore off the bandage, and silently looked at the blood-stained handkerchief.

"That quenches the fire; let it run," said she to herself. Then, with a sudden access of emotion, she said:

"Oh, Walpurga! I can't die! I can't kill myself—and yet I can't live. I've—I've been wicked—"

She hid her face against Walpurga's heart, which beat loud and violently.

"Help me! tell me what to do! Tell me quickly, before your mother comes!"

"I don't know—I don't know at all—but mother will know. She knows how to help every one. See there, it's stopped bleeding, already. Only keep calm."

The mother joined them. Irma looked at her, as if she were an angel come to save her. With a voice free from the slightest trace of doubt and hesitation, the mother said:

"Walpurga, this is your Countess!"

"Yes, mother."

"Then you're a thousand times welcome," said the old woman. "I offer you both my hands. Sad things must have happened to you. You must have fallen. Or has some one struck you in the forehead?"

Irma made no reply. She sat between the two women who supported her, and her gaze was as fixed as though she were lifeless.

"Mother, help her; say something to her," whispered Walpurga.

"No; let her quietly recover herself. Every wound must bleed itself out."

Irma grasped her hands, kissed them and cried:

"Mother! you've saved me. Mother! I'll remain with you; take me with you!"

"Yes, that I will. You'll find it ever so healthy up in my home. The air and the trees there are better than anywhere else in this world. There you'll become well again, all this will fall away from you. Does your father know that you've run away, out into the wide world? and does he know why?"

"He did know. He's dead. Walpurga, tell her how it is with me."

"There's time enough for that; for, God willing, we'll be together a long while. You can tell me all when you're calm and composed. But now, drink something."

After considerable effort, the two women succeeded in

drawing the silver-foiled cork. Walpurga finished the operation by taking the cork between her teeth and pulling it out. Irma drank some of the wine.

"Drink," said Walpurga. "It must be wholesome, for Doctor Gunther sent it to mother. But she won't drink it. She says she'll wait till she grows old and needs the strength that wine gives."

A melancholy smile passed over Irma's face at the thought that the aged woman before her meant to wait until she grew old.

Irma was obliged to take a few more mouthfuls of the wine. When she complained of the pain in her foot, the mother skillfully extracted a thorn. Irma felt as if a gentle angel were attending her, and offered to kiss the old woman's hands once more. "My hands were never kissed before you kissed 'em," said the old woman deprecatingly; "but I know how you mean it. I never touched a countess before in all my life; but they're human beings, just like the rest of us."

Irma heaved a deep sigh. She told her rescuers that she would go with them, but only on condition that no one except themselves was to know who she was. She wished to live concealed and unknown, and, if she were discovered, she would take her life.

"Don't do that again," said the old woman, with a stern voice. "Don't say that again. It won't do to trifle with such things. That's no threat. But here you have my hand and my word of honor that not a word shall pass my lips."

"Nor mine either!" exclaimed Walpurga, laying her hand, with that of her mother, in Irma's.

"Tell me one thing," asked the mother. "Why didn't you go to a convent? One can do that nowadays."

"I mean to expiate in freedom," said she.

"I understand you. You're right."

Not another word was spoken. The mother held her hand upon Irma's forehead, on which she now bound a white handkerchief. It'll be well in a week, and there won't be a scar left," she said, consolingly.

"The white cloth shall remain there as long as I live," replied Irma. She now asked them to provide her with

other clothes, before she showed herself in Hansei's presence.

Walpurga hurried back to the inn near the landing-place. Here she found Hansei in an angry mood, and scolding terribly. Every interruption annoyed him. He had enough to look after, as it was. There was more work put upon him than upon the horses in the wagon. He was in that excited state, often produced by travel and change of abode, in which one's better self seems to disappear, and when a restless and homeless feeling renders its possessor excessively irritable. Besides that, the foal, beautiful as it was, had put him to considerable trouble. It had run away, and had almost got under the wheels of one of the wagons.

Hansei was very angry. Walpurga found it difficult to pacify him, and at last she burst into tears and said:

"Sooner than move to our new home in anger and hatred, I'd rather we'd all gone to the bottom in the boat."

"Yes, yes; I'm quiet; just try to be so, too," said Hansei, recovering himself and looking toward the lake as if Black Esther's head were again rising on the waves. He continued:

"But we must hurry on, or else it'll be pitch dark before we get there. We've a good distance before us, and the horses have a heavy load. What are you about there? Whom have you got over there among the willows?"

"You'll know all about it in a little while. Just take my word for it, that mother and I are doing something that'll be a satisfaction to us as long as we live. I am glad that God has given me a chance to do something at this moment, when I would have liked to ask Him what I could do to prove my gratitude. She's a dear, kind creature, and you'll be satisfied."

Walpurga spoke so earnestly and impressively that Hansei replied:

"I'll drive on with the household goods, and, if it suits you, you can follow in the covered wagon. Come as soon as you can. Uncle's here and he'll drive."

Walpurga nodded to Hansei, who started up the mountain with the loaded wagon. Then she went to a chest

and took out a full suit. She carried the clothes into the thicket, where she found Irma sitting beside the mother, Irma's head resting against the breast of the old woman, who had wound her arms around her.

"Irmgard will be quite happy with us; we know each other, already," said the mother.

No one on earth knows what Irma confessed to old Beate, down among the willows by the lake. The old woman breathed thrice on her brow, as if her warm breath could dispel the charm.

"And now put on your clothes," said Beate. In the thicket, Irma exchanged her dress for the peasant's garb.

When she left the thicket and returned to the path, she kept her eyes fixed on the ground. She was now entering upon a new world—a new life.

She looked at the beings and the objects in the parlor of the inn, as if it were all a dream. She had come back to the world again from the depths of the lake. Here, life was going on as usual; there was eating and drinking, laughing and talking, singing, driving, riding—all this she had already left far behind her. She was as one risen from the dead. Silent, and with folded hands, she sat upon the bench, caring nothing for the world about her, longing for only perfect solitude. And yet her ear was so acute that she overheard the hostess whisper to Walpurga: "A kinswoman, I suppose," and, significantly putting her finger to her forehead, "she don't seem to be in her right wits."

"Maybe you're right," replied Walpurga. A smile, as of pain, passed over Irma's beautiful lips: "There's one protecting disguise—and it is madness."

She felt if a net of thorns had descended upon her head. Insanity may, indeed, sometimes serve as an invisible cap; concealing, or rather disguising, the sorrow-stricken wearer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE grandmother was out of doors, arranging a bed in the covered wagon. She told her brother to drive carefully, and not crack his whip so often; for Uncle Peter, known as the little pitchman, was so elated at the

idea of having a whip and two horses under his charge, that he cracked his whip incessantly.

"The stranger's puttings on airs, I think. Who is she, anyhow?" asked the little pitchman, taking the thong between his teeth, as if he could only thus prevent himself from cracking the whip.

"A poor, sick creature," said Beate. It went hard with her to say this, and yet it was not a lie.

Hansei had gone on with the large team. And now the women, too, agreed that it was time to start. Irma now saw Walpurga's child for the first time, and, as soon as it caught Irma's eye, it shouted and wanted to go to her.

"Oh! that's lovely," exclaimed Walpurga and her mother at the same time. "She's always so shy."

Irma took the child in her arms and hugged and kissed it. She felt as if again embracing the childlike purity which, in herself, had withered and died. Her expression changed from one of joy to that of sadness, and the grandmother said:

"You've a good, honest heart; children feel and know that. But now you'd better give the child to Walpurga and get into the wagon."

A bed had been prepared for Irma. The grandmother got up into the wagon and, taking the child in her arms, sat down beside Irma. Walpurga and Gundel sat in front, looking about them. The uncle walked beside the horses, and would, now and then, cast a sorrowful look at the whip that he was not allowed to crack. No one spoke a word; but the child laughed and prattled and wanted Irma to play with her.

"Go to sleep now," said the grandmother, and in a soft voice she sang both child and Irma to sleep.

"Who's that coming down the hill?" suddenly asked Walpurga of the uncle.

"The one's a forester, and the other must be a nobleman's servant."

Walpurga was alarmed. When the horsemen drew near, she recognized Baum. Swift as thought she slipped into the wagon and left Gundel sitting alone in front.

The horsemen drew nearer, and at last halted by the wagon. The child awoke and cried, and thus awakened

Irma. A thin curtain was all that separated her from him. The horse that Baum rode distended its nostrils, threw its head back, and reared so that it was difficult to hold it in check. Irma recognized it. It was Pluto, her own horse; and so it had been captured and brought back again. If the horse could have spoken, it would have said: "Here is my mistress; here is the one whom you seek."

Irma could hear Baum asking the uncle:

"Did you meet a young lady in a blue riding-habit?"

"No."

"Did you hear any one mention such a person?"

"Not a word."

"Whom have you in the wagon there?"

Irma trembled. Walpurga grasped her hand. It was as cold as ice. The child cried again.

"You can hear it; there's a little child in there," said the forester to Baum. "Let's go on."

The horseman rode off, and Irma, looking after them, could see her feathered hat hanging from the pommel of the saddle.

The wagon slowly ascended the hill, while the horsemen hurried off in the opposite direction.

Irma kissed the child, and said:

"Oh you darling! you've saved me, for the second time. Let me get out, too. I want to walk."

The mother dissuaded her and begged her to remain with her. Irma yielded; she had hardly lain down before she fell asleep again, and no longer knew that she was crossing the mountains in a farmer's wagon.

It was already past noon when they overtook Hansei, far up the mountain, where he had stopped to rest his horses.

"Let's keep together," said he. His anger had vanished, and he now was twice as kindly as before. "I think we oughtn't to enter our new home in such a straggling way. I've given the servants strict orders to drive slowly. We can easily catch up with 'em, for our wagons are light, and then we'll all be together. I want mother and wife and child to be with me when we enter on the farm."

"That's right! I'm glad you've come to your senses again. Oh! I know you. When you're excited, the only thing to do is to leave you alone for a little while, and you soon get homesick after your folks and the good Hansei that's in you; and then you're all right again. But come here. I want to tell you something. To-day, you'll have to prove whether you're a real, strong man; and if you do, I'll never, in all my life, deny that men are stronger than we."

"Well! what is it?"

She led him into the inn garden, and said:

"You've often heard tell of the household fairies they used to have in olden times? They were good, peaceful spirits that brought blessings and wealth and good fortune to whatever house they visited. But there was one condition. As long as they stayed, no one dared ask their name, or where they'd come from."

"Yes, yes! I've heard that often enough; but I don't believe a word of it."

"You needn't believe it; I don't ask you to. I want to put you to the test. Listen! Mother and I have ever so tender and delicate a creature in the wagon there. She's strong and powerful, but quite strange in her ways. She means to stay with us, but she won't be a burden. And now, Hansei, tell me; have you strength enough never to ask her who and whence she is, or any other question? You must take my word for it. I know her and know what I'm doing in keeping her with us; and on the strength of that, will you be good and faithful and kind to her? Tell me; can you, will you be this?"

"Is that the way I'm to prove whether I'm a strong man, or not?"

"Yes, that's it; nothing more."

"I can do that; and here's my hand on it."

"Let me have it."

"You'll see. I'll keep my promise; that's easy enough."

"It isn't as easy as you think for, Hansei."

"For the sake of getting you, for the rest of your life, to admit that a man has more strength of mind than a woman, and can easier undertake a thing, and carry it

out, too, I'll show you what I can do. Your good friend shall be mine, too. But she isn't crazy, nor doesn't bite, does she?"

"No, you needn't worry about that."

"All right, then; that settles it."

Hansei went out to the wagon with Walpurga, who drew the curtain aside and said:

"My husband wants to bid you welcome."

"Welcome!" said Irma, offering her hand to Hansei.

He stared at her in mute astonishment, and it was not until Walpurga raised his hand that he offered it to Irma.

They had taken up their journey once more, and Hansei, who, with his wife, was walking up hill in advance of the wagons, said:

"Wife! if it wasn't daylight, and you and mother and the child weren't here,—if I wasn't quite sure that I'm in my right senses, and that it's all true—I'd really believe that you had a fairy in the wagon there. Is she lame? can't she walk?"

"She can walk very well."

Walpurga turned back toward the wagon, and said:

"Irmgard, don't you want to get out for a little while and walk up the hill with us? It's so beautiful here."

"Yes, gladly," was the answer.

Irma alighted and walked with them for a while. Hansei regarded her with timid side-glances. The stranger limped. Perhaps it's true after all; the Lady of the Lake has a swan's foot and can't walk well. He cast sly looks at her feet, but they were just like those of other people. Gradually, he ventured to raise his eyes. He saw that the clothes she had on were his wife's, and that she was wondrously beautiful. His head grew so warm that he lifted his hat now and then. What's real in the world and what isn't? he would ask himself. Had his wife a double? and could she appear in another form?

Walpurga lingered behind and left the two walking by themselves. Irma asked herself what she had better say to Hansei, and how she should address him. It was the first time in her life that she found herself in an humble position. "How should I address one of an inferior class?" thought she. At last she said:

"You're a happy man; you have a wife and child and mother-in-law as good as one can wish for in this world?"

"Yes, yes, they'll do very well," said Hansei.

Although she had not intended it, Irma's praise was, to a certain extent, patronizing, and Hansei had observed this. He would have confirmed her opinion by his answer, and would have liked to ask: "Have you known her long?" but he remembered that he had promised to ask no questions. Walpurga was right; it was a hard task. He rolled his tongue about in his mouth, and felt as if the one-half of it were tied.

"The country's pretty rough hereabouts; further up, when you reach our new home, it's much better," said he, at last. It was long before he could say that. He had intended to ask whether the stranger had ever been in that neighborhood before; but he had promised to ask no questions, and to transpose one's questions is not so easy a task.

Irma felt that she must say something that would put the man at his ease, and she began: "Hansei!"—his face brightened when he heard her calling him by name—"Hansei, try to think that you've known me for ever so long; don't look at me as a stranger. I don't like to ask anything of others; but I do ask this of you. I know you'll do it; for you've a good, kind face. And it couldn't be otherwise; Walpurga's husband, with whom she is so happy, must be a good man. I beg of you, therefore, don't be concerned; I'll not be a burden to you."

"Oh, there's no idea of such a thing. We've enough, thank God. One cow more in the stable, or one person more in the house, won't make any difference; so you needn't worry about that.—And we've also taken charge of an old pensioner on the estate and—I don't want to know what you don't want to tell, and if any one in this world offers to harm you, call me, and I'll defend you with my life. But it seems you haven't been much among the mountains; so let me give you a piece of advice. In climbing mountains, the rule is: Go right on, and never stop."

They waited for the wagon. Hansei drew a long

breath after his long speech. He felt satisfied with himself, and looked about him with a self-complacent air.

Irma sat down by the wayside. She was now on the heights which, on the evening before, she had seen all aglow with the rosy sunset, and then fading away in the pale mists. The giant peaks that she had beheld from afar were now near, and seemed still vaster than before. Here and there in the woods, there was a clearing of meadow and field, and now and then, a house was visible. Looking down, she caught glimpses of the foaming, sparkling forest stream, so far below them that they could scarcely hear its roar.

Hansei walked at Irma's side without uttering a word.

The wagon overtook them. Irma got in again, Hansei assisting her quite politely. He was about to lift his hat to her, when, with cheerful word and glance, she thanked him.

"She's a very decent person," said Hansei to his wife, "and we've a nice little room for her, too, if she isn't afraid of the old pensioner."

Walpurga felt happy that the great point was gained.

As Hansei had talked with the stranger, the little pitchman thought himself entitled to say something, too; and, as the first sign of his resolve, he cracked his whip so loudly that the sound was echoed back from the valley and the mountains.

"Didn't I tell you to be quiet?" said the old woman.

"She—she's well again," replied the little pitchman.

"Isn't it so?" said he, addressing Irma. "The noise don't hurt you?"

Irma told him not to put himself out on her account, and, emboldened by her answer, he inquired:

"What's your name?"

"Irmgard."

"Indeed! why, that was my wife's name, and, if you've no objection, I'll marry an Irmgard again. I've got half of a house and a whole goat. I owe something on the house, but the goat's paid for. Say! will you have me?"

"Don't make such jokes, Peter," cried Beate, nothing loth, however, to hear pleasantries from some quarter.

The little pitchman laughed heartily, and was well

pleased with himself. Yes, Hansei was now the freehold farmer, but still he couldn't talk to people the way he could. The little pitchman was quite entertaining. When he had nothing more to say, he would gather strawberries, which grew by the wayside and, in this high region, did not ripen until late. He laid them on a hazel leaf and offered them to Irma. Yes, Peter has good manners; he could tell that by his sister's face, for she smiled her approval.

The journey to their new home proceeded without further adventure. When they came in sight of their native village, and before they had reached the boundary line, the grandmother requested them to stop. She alighted, went into the woods, knelt down until her face touched the ground, and exclaimed:

"God be praised, I'm with thee again! Keep me well, let me and mine pass many peaceful, happy days on thee, and, when my last hour comes, receive me kindly."

She went back to the wagon, and said: "God be with you all! now we're at home. Do you see that house up there, with the big linden tree? That's the freehold farm, where we're to live."

Gundel and the child alighted, Irma alone remaining in the wagon. All the others walked the rest of the way.

They passed through the valley and reached the village, where they were still an hour's walk from the farm. As they entered the village, the little pitchman cracked his whip loudly. He wanted every one to see his kindred, and the amount of property he was now moving with. They passed by a little cottage.

"I was born there"; said the grandmother to Hansei.

"I'll take off my hat to that house," replied Hansei, suiting his action to the word.

The wagons which had preceded them were stopping at the inn which was near the town hall and the church. The people had gathered there to get a look at the new freeholder and his family. The little pitchman acted as master of ceremonies, and pointed out the burgomaster's wife to Walpurga. Walpurga went up to her, and Beate felt truly happy, for the mother of the burgomaster's wife, she in whose house Beate, while yet in her school-days,

had served as nursemaid, was also there. She inquired for the boy whom she had then taken care of. "He's dead," they said, "but there's his son." A stalwart lad was called, but when Beate told him that she had taken care of his father while he was yet a little child, he had not a word to say.

Half the village had gathered about the new arrivals, and they remained there chatting for a long while.

Irma lay there in the wagon in the open market-place, forgotten by those whom she had joined. The grandmother was the first to think of her; she hurried out and said:

"Forgive us for forgetting you so, but we'll soon be home."

Irma replied that they need not trouble themselves about her. The grandmother did not quite understand the tone in which she spoke.

Here on the public road, while she lay in the covered farm wagon and could hear the loud talking of the crowd, she felt a pang of grief to think that she was an object of charity, and that she to whom the world had once done homage, was now forgotten. But she quickly regained her self-command. It is better thus, for thus you are alone.

At last they drove on. The road again lay up the mountain. The grandmother was quite happy and greeted every one. The plum-trees were laden with fruit, and the apple-trees along the road—she had, while yet a girl, seen them planted—had grown so large that they bent under the weight of the ruddy fruit. The grandmother often said: "I never thought it was so far; no, I meant to say, I thought it was further than this. Dear me, how I'm talking. It seems as if the world had shrunk together. Children, I tell you what, you'll live to see great, and good, and beautiful things come to pass. Come, give me the child," said she to Gundel, and she took Burgei in her arms, her face radiant with joy.

"Burgei, I've sung here, and so will you; and here I carried your mother on my arms, just as I'm carrying you, now. There! give that to the bird."

She had taken a piece of bread from her pocket and gave the child some crumbs to scatter to the birds on the

way, while she, too, kept throwing crumbs to the right and the left.

She did not speak another word, but her lips moved silently.

CHAPTER XV.

AS they drew near the house, they could hear the neighing of the white foal.

"That's a good beginning," cried Hansei.

The grandmother placed the child on the ground, and got her hymn-book out of the chest. Pressing the book against her breast with both hands, she went into the house, being the first to enter. Hansei, who was standing near the stable, took a piece of chalk from his pocket and wrote the letters C. M. B., and the date, on the stable-door. Then he, too, went into the house, his wife, Irma and the child following him.

Before going into the sitting-room, the grandmother knocked thrice at the door. When she had entered, she placed the open hymn-book upon the open window-sill, so that the sun might read in it. There were no tables or chairs in the room.

Hansei shook hands with his wife and said, "God be with you, freeholder's wife."

From that moment, Walpurga was known as the "freeholder's wife," and was never called by any other name.

And now they showed Irma her room. The view extended over meadow and brook and the neighboring forest. She examined the room. There was naught but a green Dutch oven and bare walls, and she had brought nothing with her. In her paternal mansion, and at the castle, there were chairs and tables, horses and carriages; but here—

None of these follow the dead.

Irma knelt by the window and gazed out over meadow and forest, where the sun was now singing.

How was it yesterday—was it only yesterday?—when you saw the sun go down?

Her thoughts were confused and indistinct. She pressed her hand to her forehead; the white handkerchief

was still there. A bird looked up to her from the meadow, and, when her glance rested upon it, it flew away into the woods.

"The bird has its nest," said she to herself, "and I—"

Suddenly she drew herself up. Hansei had walked out to the grass plot in front of Irma's window, removed the slip of the cherry-tree from his hat, and planted it in the ground.

The grandmother stood by and said: "I trust that you'll be alive and hearty, long enough to climb this tree and gather cherries from it, and that your children and grandchildren may do the same."

There was much to do and to set to rights in the house, and, on such occasions, it usually happens that those who are dearest to one another are as much in each other's way as closets and tables which have not yet been placed where they belong. The best proof of the amiability of these folks was that they assisted each other cheerfully, and, indeed, with jest and song.

Walpurga moved her best furniture into Irma's room. Hansei did not interpose a word. "Aren't you too lonely here?" asked Walpurga, after she had arranged everything as well as possible in so short a time.

"Not at all. There is no place in all the world lonely enough for me. You've so much to do now; don't worry about me. I must now arrange things within myself. I see how good you and yours are; fate has directed me kindly."

"Oh, don't talk that way. If you hadn't given me the money, how could we have bought the farm? This is really your own."

"Don't speak of that," said Irma, with a sudden start, "never mention that money to me again."

Walpurga promised, and merely added that Irma needn't be alarmed at the old man who lived in the room above hers, and who, at times, would talk to himself and make a loud noise. He was old and blind. The children teased and worried him, but he wasn't bad and would harm no one. Walpurga offered, at all events, to leave Gundel with Irma for the first night; but Irma preferred to be alone.

"You'll stay with us; won't you?" said Walpurga hesitatingly. "You won't have such bad thoughts again?"

"No, never. But don't talk now, my voice pains me and so does yours, too. Good-night! leave me alone."

Irma sat by the window and gazed out into the dark night.

Was it only a day since she had passed through such terrors? Suddenly she sprang from her seat with a shudder. She had seen Black Esther's head rising out of the darkness, had again heard her dying shriek, had beheld the distorted face and the wild, black tresses.—Her hair stood on end. Her thoughts carried her to the bottom of the lake, where she now lay dead. She opened the window and inhaled the soft, balmy air. She sat by the open casement for a long while, and suddenly heard some one laughing in her room above her.

"Ha! ha! I won't do you the favor! I won't die! I won't die! Pooh, pooh! I'll live till I'm a hundred years old and then I'll get a new lease of life."

It was the old pensioner. After a while, he continued:

"I'm not so stupid; I know that it's night now and the freeholder and his wife are come. I'll give them lots of trouble. I'm Jochem. Jochem's my name, and what the people don't like, I do for spite. Ha! ha! ha! I don't use any light and they must make me an allowance for that. I'll insist on it, if I have to go to the king himself about it."

Irma started, when she heard the king mentioned.

"Yes, I'll go to the king, to the king! to the king!" cried the old man overhead, as if he knew that the word tortured Irma.

She heard him close the window and move a chair. The old man went to bed.

Irma looked out into the dark night. Not a star was to be seen. There was no light anywhere; nothing was heard but the roaring of the mountain stream and the rustling of the trees. The night seemed like a dark abyss.

"Are you still awake?" asked a soft voice without. It was the grandmother.

"I was once a servant at this farm," said she. "That was forty years ago; and now I'm the mother of the free-

holder's wife, and almost the head one on the farm. But I keep thinking of you all the time. I keep trying to think how it is in your heart. I've something to tell you. Come out again. I'll take you where it'll do you good to be. Come!"

Irma went out into the dark night with the old woman. How different this guide from the one she had had the day before!

The old woman led her to the fountain. She had brought a cup with her and gave it to Irma. "Come, drink; good cold water's the best. Water comforts the body; it cools and quiets us; it's like bathing one's soul. I know what sorrow is, too. One's insides burn as if they were afire."

Irma drank some of the water of the mountain spring. It seemed like a healing dew, whose influence was diffused through her whole frame.

The grandmother led her back to her room and said: "You've still got the shirt on that you wore at the palace. You'll never stop thinking of that place till you've burned that shirt."

The old woman would listen to no denial, and Irma was as docile as a little child. The grandmother hurried to get a coarse shirt for her and, after Irma had put it on, brought wood and a light, and burnt the other at the open fire. Irma was also obliged to cut off her long nails and throw them into the fire. Then Beate disappeared for a few moments, and returned with Irma's riding-habit. "You must have been shot; for there are balls in this," said she, spreading out the long, blue habit.

A smile passed over Irma's face, as she felt the balls that had been sewed into the lower part of the habit, so that it might hang more gracefully. Beate had also brought something very useful—a deerskin.

"Hansei sends you this," said she. "He thinks that maybe you're used to having something soft for your feet to rest on. He shot the deer himself."

Irma appreciated the kindness of the man who could show such affection to one who was both a stranger and a mystery to him.

The grandmother remained at Irma's bedside until she

fell asleep. Then she breathed thrice on the sleeper and left the room.

It was late at night when Irma awoke.

"To the king! to the king! to the king!" The words had been uttered thrice in a loud voice. Was it hers, or that of the man overhead? Irma pressed her hand to her forehead and felt the bandage. Was it sea grass that had gathered there? Was she lying alive at the bottom of the lake? Gradually all that had happened became clear to her.

Alone, in the dark and silent night, she wept. And these were the first tears she had shed since the terrible events through which she had passed.

It was evening when Irma awoke. She put her hand to her forehead. A wet cloth had been bound round it. She had been sleeping nearly twenty-four hours. The grandmother was sitting by her bed.

"You've a strong constitution," said the old woman, "and that helped you. It's all right now."

Irma arose. She felt strong and, guided by the grandmother, walked over to the dwelling-house.

"God be praised, that you're well again," said Walpurga, who was standing there with her husband; and Hansei added: "Yes, that's right."

Irma thanked them, and looked up at the gable of the house. What words there met her eye?

"Don't you think the house has a good motto written on its forehead?" asked Hansei.

Irma started. On the gable of the house, she read the following inscription:

EAT AND DRINK: FORGET NOT GOD: THINE HONOR
GUARD:

OF ALL THY STORE,
THOU'LT CARRY HENCE
A WINDING-SHEET
AND NOTHING MORE.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH Irma's sudden flight, Baum's occupation was gone. He returned to where she was to have waited for him, and found that she had disappeared. He gazed into the distance, but saw nothing. A dog following its master's track was better off than he, for while instinct would help it, man could only guess.

Had she flown? and if so, whither? Why had she done so? and what, under such circumstances, was the duty of a subordinate? Ought he to pursue her who had sent him back? She had honestly and frankly sent the dog home; but the servant was only human and must therefore be imposed upon.

"For shame, Countess! Thus to fool a poor servant who dare not disobey!" said Baum, speaking to himself. He felt that now, for the first time, he was put to the great test, and that this was the time to prove himself a reasoning servant. Perhaps the letters he had brought contained an appointment for this evening. They are at the hunt and, as if by chance, meet in the woods; for it would not do to visit Wildenort openly, as it was but a short time since they had gone into mourning there. And so they mean to keep even the servant in ignorance of their plans. But why should they? He could have been depended upon.

But perhaps the countess had escaped after all.

But why? and whither?

They had shown so much confidence in him. The head chamberlain had told him before leaving: "You're always to remain near the countess, always—do you understand? And you are to conduct her back to court."

Could they have dreamt that she meant to escape? and if so, why should they only half trust him?

"I am innocent!" exclaimed Baum; but what avails innocence? It was more important to be clever and sensible.

Baum's master, Baroness Steigeneck's chief chamberlain, had imparted some valuable precepts to him. "There are two things," said he, "that a good servant should always have with him—a sharp knife and a good watch. When anything happens that disconcerts you, take out your watch, count off ten seconds, and then make up your mind what is best to be done."

One disadvantage possessed by this precept, in common with many other good ones, is the great danger of your forgetting it when excited.

Baum rode back to the castle. Perhaps the countess had returned by some other road; perhaps her maid could tell him where she had intended to ride to. He asked the maid: "Is your mistress here?"

"No; she rode out with you."

"Don't you know where she intended going?"

"Has she left you? Oh, God! now she'll do it, for sure."

"What do you mean?"

"I've already told the count, that I believed she'd take her life. I believe she has either poison or a dagger with her; she'll kill herself."

"If she meant to take her life that way, she might have done so in her room," replied Baum.

"Yes, yes! It was only last night that she cried out in her sleep, 'Deep in the lake!' Oh gracious heavens! my dear, lovely countess is dead! Oh, what an unhappy creature I am! what will become of me!"

Baum endeavored to pacify her, and inquired whether the countess had left any papers anywhere.

The writing-desk was open and papers were strewn about on it. They found a letter directed to the queen. Baum wanted to take it, but the maid would not give it up. She would not suffer a stranger to pry into her mistress's secrets.

In the midst of the dispute, Baum suddenly took out his watch. The chamberlain's advice had occurred to

him. He looked fixedly at the dial, and when he had finished counting ten, he nodded with a self-satisfied air, for he had regained his presence of mind.

Very well, the maid might deliver the letter herself; that would neither help nor hinder matters. But he would now show himself worthy of the greatest confidence. His task was to institute inquiries; perhaps he might yet save the countess.

While the maid, who was hastily putting the letter into her pocket, had turned her back upon him, he saw another letter addressed "To my friend." He quickly perceived that this was of far greater value than the other, and put it into his own pocket. He well knew that there was only one person for whom it could be intended and he knew who that person was. The maid had heard the rustling of the paper, and now asked him to give it to her. Baum ran out of the room and summoned the servants. The maid followed him, and he now quickly changed the attitude of defense for one of attack, and demanded the letter to the queen, in order that he might open it and thus obtain some clue as to the countess's whereabouts. He said that he would hold the maid responsible for the consequences. She ran away, and he made no further attempt to carry out his plan, for he did not know whether he had a right to open the letter. At any rate, he had undisputed possession of the more important epistle to the king. He ordered the groom to saddle another horse and accompany him.

The rosy sunset was already gilding the windows of the castle when the two horsemen rode forth. But whither?

They questioned a laborer working on the road, but he had seen nothing of the countess. They saw a shepherd driving his flock homeward, and, riding up to him, they inquired whether he had seen her. He nodded affirmatively, but the loud bleating of the sheep prevented them from hearing what he said. Baum alighted, and learned from him that the countess had been seen riding full tilt along the road that led to the Chamois hill.

"She sits her horse firmly, and rides very well," said the shepherd, praising her.

This was a clue, at all events. They rode off, at full

gallop, in the direction indicated. When they reached the drained marsh, they heard the neighing of a horse. They rode up to it, and found that it was Irma's saddle-horse, quietly grazing, but bridle and girth were covered with thick foam. "The countess has been thrown. Who knows where she may be lying, weak and faint?" said Baum. He meant to be discreet, and was in no hurry to tell all to the groom.

They searched for her everywhere, and called out her name again and again. They found nothing, nor did they receive any answer. Baum discovered the horse's tracks, but was somewhat confused by them, as it had taken the same path going and returning. They took the horse with them, but did not mount, for it was necessary to find out where the track led to. Baum's keen eye enabled him to distinguish the hoof-prints in the twilight.

"If we only had the dog with us; he knows her. Why didn't you bring the dog with you?" he asked angrily.

"You didn't say anything about it."

"Ride back and bring him. No, stay; I can't be here alone."

They reached the Chamois hill. "Let's turn aside, into the wood," cried Baum.

He now found use for his good knife. He gathered some of the brushwood, bound it together into a torch, kindled it, and its light enabled him to find the track. It was here that the horse had turned. There were also prints of a woman's foot going in the opposite direction. He followed them for a few paces and then lost the track.

"She must be here," said Baum. "It was from here that she went down into the wood; I know every spot about here. Keep to the left with the two horses, but always near enough to hear my voice. I'll keep to the right with one."

They searched and shouted, but found nothing. At last they met again. A stag rushed by. Could it have spoken, it might have told them where Irma had startled it from its resting-place—a full hour's walk from where they then were.

"If you find her, you'll be handsomely rewarded,"

said Baum to the groom. He addressed him in the way he thought his royal master would have done.

They spent the greater part of the night wandering in the forest. At last they were obliged to lie down and wait for the daylight, for there was no longer a path by which to lead the horses.

The day was far advanced when Baum and the groom awoke. They could see the sparkling lake from afar, and could hear the sounds of distant music, while the rock near which they stood echoed the reports of cannon.

Baum took the pistols from the saddle-pouch and fired them off in rapid succession. Then he listened with bated breath, thinking that if Irma were anywhere in the neighborhood, she would hear the shots and give some sign of her whereabouts; but not a sound was heard.

They now found a forest-path leading down toward the lake. They reached the water's edge. At their feet lay the lake, smooth as a mirror and stretching away for miles. Who knew what lay concealed within its depths? In the distance, there was a boat with people and beasts aboard, and now the boat reached the shore. Baum's companion turned to the other side, where there were a few scattered farmhouses and fishermen's huts. Man and beast were worn out and needed rest. Baum asked every one he met whether they had seen a lady in a blue riding-habit and wearing a hat with a feather; but he could find no trace of her anywhere.

"Stop!" at last said a little old man who was cutting willows by the lake: "I've seen her."

"Where? When?"

"Over there in the tavern. It's almost a year ago; she lived there a good many weeks."

Baum cursed the peasant folk for a stupid set.

Fortunately, he met a gend'arme and told him who he was and whom he was looking for. He then sent the groom back to Wildenort with the lady's saddle. Placing his own saddle on Pluto, he rode along the edge of the lake with the gend'arme. On a rock near the shore, they soon saw a figure holding out a hat with a feather on it. They made for the spot, at full speed. Baum recognized

his brother Thomas, and was so startled that he lost his stirrup.

If it were he who had robbed and murdered the countess!

The gend'arme knew the wild fellow. Thomas stared and grinned at them both. His hair was wet and his clothes were dripping.

"What are you doing there?" cried the gend'arme. "Whose hat is that?"

"That's none of your business," replied Thomas, his teeth chattering with the cold.

Baum offered the shivering man his brandy flask, and Thomas took a long draught. Then, with mingled rage and sorrow, he told them that the king's sweetheart had lost her way the night before and had come to their hut, and that she had led away his sister to plunge into the lake with her. He had come too late; he had seen something floating on the water and had jumped in to save her, but the hat was all he had found.

The gend'arme was not inclined to believe Thomas's story, and would have arrested him forthwith, if Baum had not whispered to him that there was no doubt that the lady had drowned herself, and that there was no murder in the case. He was moved by a feeling akin to pity for his brother, and did not wish to have him arrested.

"Come here!" said Baum to Thomas. "Let's make an exchange. I'll give you my flask—there's a good deal in it yet—for the hat."

"Oh no! I know who the hat belongs to: it's worth a lot, and I'll take it to the king."

"He still has got his sweetheart's hat,
Though she lies in the lake;
And since she's drowned, another love
Right gladly will he take,"

sang Thomas, with heavy voice, while he threw the hat up into the air and caught it again.

The gend'arme wanted to give Thomas a beating; Baum restrained him, however, and then walked up to Thomas and placed his hand upon his shoulder. Thomas started, but suddenly grew quiet, and looked at Baum as if afraid of him. Baum spoke to him with a condescend-

ing air, and Thomas listened, with mouth agape, as if trying to recollect something, he knew not what. The voice, and the hand upon his shoulder, made quite another man of him, and the savage, murderous fellow wept.

"Will you give me the hat for a gold piece, or must it be taken from you by force? You see we're two to one, and can master you," said Baum.

Without saying a word, Thomas handed him the hat, and when Baum gave him the gold piece, Thomas could not close his hand on it. As if quite bewildered, he looked now at the gold piece, now at the giver.

Baum spoke to him earnestly, and told him that he ought to give some of the money to his mother, if he still had one.

"A mother?" stammered Thomas, looking at Baum with a glassy eye. "A mother!" he repeated, as if reminded of something long forgotten.

The gend'arme was touched by the lackey's generosity. "He must be a very fine man," thought he.

Thomas again told them that Irma had been at their hut the night before, and that his mother knew more about her than he did, for she had been alone with her. Baum and the gend'arme said they would like to talk with his mother, and Thomas guided them to the hut.

On the way there, the gend'arme informed Baum of Thomas's family history. "You see, the fellow's a brawler, and has often been convicted of poaching. I've often advised him to emigrate to America, for there he can hunt as much as he pleases. He has a brother in America—a twin brother, but he must be a good-for-nothing fellow; that is, if he isn't dead. He's never yet written a line to his mother or his brother, and has never sent home as much as you could put in your eye. But that's the way they all become, after they get to America. A good many have gone there from my place, but they're all selfish, good-for-nothing fellows."

Baum smiled. He had need of all his self-command. He scarcely spoke a word, for he was nerving himself for the meeting with his mother, and felt annoyed that she, too, was mixed up in this affair. He had enough to think of without that.

The gend'arme knew many stories about poachers and other outlaws and, in order to beguile the time and entertain Baum, recounted some of them. Such stories, however, have one unpleasant feature. It is rather uncomfortable to listen to them, unless one's hands are free from guilt. Baum nodded to him graciously, for it would not do, by look or manner, to betray that he was in the least related to the abandoned wretch who was walking ahead of them. The gend'arme said that he had once been bitten in the finger by a murderer, whom he had helped to arrest, and he showed Baum the scar.

Baum, at last, endeavored to put an end to these terrible stories. He asked the gend'arme what regiment he had served in, and put the question as graciously as if he were about to draw a medal from his pocket and bestow it on the man. Now nothing can be pleasanter than to recount one's military experiences. The forester told of his many exploits, laughing heartily at his own stories, and Baum, seeing no help for it, joined in the laughter. Thomas, who was walking on before, turned around and grinned, and then went on. They reached the hut. It was empty. Old Zenza had disappeared.

"She's looking for Esther, I'm sure," said Thomas.

"What's the matter with Black Esther?" asked the gend'arme.

"Black Esther!" repeated Thomas; "ha! ha! the lake'll wash her white now. If any one would pay me well for it, I'd jump in, too."

He threw himself on the sack of leaves, and silently looked at the hands with which he had beaten Esther last night. Then he threw his head back and fell into a heavy sleep, and they could not get a word out of him. Baum and the gend'arme rode away, intending to return to the lake, in order to pursue their inquiries, and to leave directions everywhere that the search should be kept up. Emerging from the forest, they gained the highway, and here it was that they had met the covered wagon.

They were again riding along the lake at a quiet pace. A large red cow was walking along ahead of them. It stopped now and then to nibble the grass and would look across the lake. When it came to a thicket, it started,

turned about quickly and ran so fast that it almost rushed against Baum's horse.

"That cow has shied at something. There must be something lying there," said Baum, quickly alighting. His dyed hair rose on end, for he felt sure that they would find Irma's dead body the next moment. And he really did find something; for there lay Irma's torn shoes. He knew them. There were blood stains, too, and the grass was crushed, as if a human being had lain there and rolled about in pain.

Baum's hand trembled as he took up the shoes, and he trembled still more when he plucked a little flower. It was a simple leaf cup—the so-called "our-lady's-mantle," the best mountain fodder—and in this little flower there were drops of blood which were still moist.

If she had drowned herself, how had the blood got there? and whence the shoes? and why should the shoes be so far from where Thomas had found the hat? and besides, there were the footprints of larger shoes. If Irma had been murdered, after all! If his brother—

"She's dead, that's the main point," said Baum, consoling himself, "and I have the proofs. What good would it do to draw another being into trouble?" He put the little blood-besprinkled plant away with the letter addressed "To my friend."

Acompanied by the gend'arme, he went to the inn at the landing-place where the wanderers had halted that morning.

The gend'arme again inquired about the lady in the blue riding-habit.

The manner of the hostess showed that the gend'arme's question had set her thinking. Could it have been the crazy woman who was with the travelers? There had been so much running hither and thither and carrying of bundles of clothes, and she had such a queer look about her.

"Do you know anything about it?" said the gend'arme, looking her straight in the face, "speak out!"

"I don't know a thing," said the hostess. "Did I say a word? What do you want of me?"

There is nothing which the country people dread so

much as being called into court in order to bear witness, and so the hostess was careful not to utter a single word that might lead to such a result.

Baum saw that he had made a mistake in taking the gend'arme with him, for his presence alarmed those who might really have something to tell. He, therefore, sent him off, so that he might make further inquiries on his own account.

Baum stood before a looking-glass, combing and brushing his dyed hair which, that day, was unusually refractory. For the first time in his life he was perfectly modest. He admitted to himself that, after all, he was not the right man to follow up such an affair, and that he had wasted too much time already. Others would be before him in profiting by whatever advantage was to be gained from Irma's death. He felt that he had better hurry back to the palace, and that there were others there, enough of them, too, who could work up such a case far better than he.

He endeavored to sound the hostess, who, he still thought, knew something of the affair. But he was unsuccessful, for she had not forgotten his comrade, the gend'arme, nor did it help, in the least, when he pointed to his buttons and informed her that he was the king's lackey.

It suddenly occurred to him that Walpurga lived in the neighborhood. It was scarcely a year since he had been here with Doctor Sixtus. Irma had always been a friend of Walpurga's, and perhaps was now hiding with her—such high-flown people were capable of anything.

The large boat still lay before the inn. Baum, taking his horse with him, went on board and ordered them to put off at once. He permitted a laborer who arrived with a great barrow-load of hay, which he had gathered on the most dangerous crags, to cross in the same boat with him. They put off. Baum lay down on the wild hay, feeling completely worn out.

He asked the boatman whether they had seen anything of a drowned person. They answered that, in the morning, a human head with long hair had been seen rising to the surface, and that, in all likelihood, it was a woman.

Baum suddenly drew himself up and, with a bewildered

look, gazed over the sparkling surface of the lake. "If the gentleman would like to wait," said the elder boatman to Baum, "the lake will give up its dead at the end of three days." Baum did not care to hear any more; he merely felt in his pocket, to make sure that he still possessed the letter and the blood-stained flower. Having satisfied himself on this point, he stretched himself still more comfortably than before and fell asleep. It was not until the boat struck against the shore that he awoke.

There was no longer any need of hunting up Walpurga; but he did so, nevertheless, in order to show that he had left nothing undone. He went up to the cottage by the lake and knocked at the door. There was no answer. He looked in at the window. Two large cat's eyes were staring at him. The cat was sitting on the ledge. She was the only one who had remained behind. The room was completely dismantled; not a table or even a chair was to be seen. As if in a dream, or under the influence of a magic spell, he walked back again through the garden.

A chattering magpie sat up in the leafless cherry-tree; but not a human being was visible. At last a man passed by. Baum recognized him; it was tailor Schneck.

"Say!" he called out, "what's become of Hansei and Walpurga?"

"They're gone over the mountains. They've moved away and bought a great farm. They call it the freehold; it's way down by the frontier."

Tailor Schneck was in a talkative mood, and inquired whether the gentleman had brought anything from the king and queen. But Baum was sparing of his words. He mounted his horse and rode off in the direction of the summer palace.

In the midst of the hurry and excitement, he had retained enough composure to calculate how this event might serve as a springing-board from which he could bound into a higher position. Henceforth, he would be the king's confidant. He alone knew what had happened and how it had all come about. He looked at the hand which the king would press in gratitude, and felt as if the king had done so already. The head chamberlain was old and decrepit; he would surely step into his place.

It would have been better, of course, if he could have reported that Irma had been murdered—the gend'arme, like a slcuth-hound, had found a clue— But no; that wouldn't do; it was his brother, after all—although it might be better for him if he were obliged to spend the rest of his days behind the prison bars. He resolved that he would be very good to his mother and brother—that is, after he had become head chamberlain. His sister was dead,—and it was a great pity, too—but he would surely do this, if he got on and if the king should give him lots of money and a good life annuity. Baum was bold enough to tell God that he ought to aid him in obtaining what he wanted, as he meant to do good with it.

As he rode on through the darkness, he would sometimes catch himself falling asleep, for it was the second night he had spent in such unrest—his thoughts were confused and bewildered.

At the last post-house, he left his horse and took a post-chaise.

It was early in the morning when the carriage arrived at the summer palace. They found it difficult to arouse Baum, and it was some time before he was fully awake and could recollect where he was and what he had brought with him.

Various court carriages were in waiting, and fine saddle-horses were being led from the stables. Baum scarcely heard the salutations of his comrades and the grooms. He entered the palace and ascended the staircase. He was so completely worn out that he felt as if his knees would sink under him. He entered the king's ante-chamber. The old head chamberlain hastily took the pinch of snuff which he had been holding between his fingers, and offered his hand to Baum. Baum sank into a chair, and expressed a wish to be forthwith announced to his majesty.

“I can't yet. You must wait,” replied the head chamberlain.

It was only by a violent effort that Baum was enabled to keep his seat and prevent himself from falling asleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE king was in his cabinet at an early hour. He avoided all enervating self-indulgence, and his powers of endurance surpassed those of any other member of the court. It was his custom to take a cold bath every morning, all the year round, and this always gave him new life and strength. He knew nothing of *deshabille*, and always left his bath-room fully dressed for the day.

There was to be a hunt that day, and the king was in hunting costume. He had repaired to the cabinet, for the purpose of dispatching various matters of business that required his immediate attention.

His office was situated in the central building, in the so-called Elector's Tower. It was a large, lofty apartment, and comfortable withal. Its walls were covered with a sort of handy-volume library, military maps and various favorite specimens of plastic art, mostly antiques, of which he had procured copies while yet a prince. There was also a letter-weight, formed of balls from the battle-field of Leipsic. The oaken furniture was in the Renaissance style—the large writing-table stood in the center of the room. A water-color picture, representing the queen as a bride, hung on his right.

The king entered and touched the bell which stood on the writing-table; the privy councilor presented himself.

He handed several papers to the king, who hurriedly read and signed them. The councilor presented a report in regard to the household ministry. The king, meanwhile, walked up and down the room. Suddenly he exclaimed:

“What’s that?”

From the adjoining room, he heard sounds as if moving and lifting, and also scraping footsteps, just as if a coffin were being borne away. He touched the bell. In an instant, the door opened and the head chamberlain appeared.

“What insufferable noise is that in the gallery?”

“Your Majesty ordered the large picture to be removed.”

The king remembered having given the order the day before.

Although he had, for a long while, been accustomed to seeing the picture in that place, it had yesterday suddenly become repugnant to him. The painting represented Belshazzar seated on his throne and surrounded by his creatures, while a hand issuing from the clouds is writing "Mene Tekel" on the wall. The figures were all in life size. The king had given directions that the picture should be removed to the public gallery.

"I am awkwardly served," said the king impatiently. "It would have been time to do that while I was at the hunt."

The head chamberlain trembled when he heard these words. His hands dropped, and his head bent as if with shame. It was with difficulty that he dragged himself out through the opposite door. Instant silence ensued. Noiselessly, the painting was placed on the floor and the servants retired.

The chamberlain came around, from the other side, into the anteroom. He sat down in an armchair and took a pinch of snuff between his fingers, but was so absorbed in thought that he forgot to use it until the very moment when Baum entered the room.

He sat opposite Baum. All was silent. Now and then he would shake his head mournfully and look at his large armchair. "Yes, he'll soon be sitting here, and I'll be dismissed," thought he. When the privy counselor passed through the ante-chamber, the old chamberlain forgot to bring him his hat. Baum did it in his stead, for Baum was fresh again. This was no time to show signs of fatigue. He felt that he held the winning card, and that now was the time to play it.

The bell in the cabinet was again heard.

"Is there any one else in the anteroom?" inquired the king of the chamberlain.

"Yes, Your Majesty; Baum is here."

"Let him enter."

Baum felt fully conscious of his importance. The king had not ordered him to report to the chamberlain, but had said, "Let him enter." He desired to confer with

him in person. The confidential position which he had craved was already his.

Baum's usually grave and submissive manner seemed more impressive than ever before.

"Have you a message?" asked the king.

"No, Your Majesty."

"What have you there?"

"Your Majesty," replied Baum, placing his bundle on the chair and untying it, "I found this hat of Countess von Wildenort in the lake, and these shoes among the willows on the shore."

The king put forth his hand, as if to grasp these tokens, and then drew it back and pressed it to his heart. He stared at Baum and seemed lost in surprise.

"What does it all mean?" he asked, raising his hand to his head, as if to smooth down his hair which stood on end.

"Your Majesty," continued Baum, who himself trembled when he saw the king's agitated manner, "the countess wore these articles when she rode out with me and ran away."

"Ran away? and—"

Baum laid his hand on his watch, and, although he could not see the dial, he counted the seconds, nevertheless; after which he softly answered:

"The countess drowned herself in the lake last night—no, it was night before last. The boatman saw the body of a female rise on the waters and sink again; and tomorrow, which is the third day, the lake will give her up."

The king motioned him to stop—it was enough—his hand trembled; he grasped the back of a chair to support himself, and stared at the hat and shoes.

Baum dropped his eyes. He felt that the king's gaze was fixed upon him, but he still kept looking on the floor, which seemed to be rising and lifting the lackey to the level of the throne. In his mind's eye, he already beheld himself at the king's side, and as the confidant of royalty. Baum modestly inclined his head still lower. He heard the king pacing the room, but still he did not look up.

"A downcast air," thought he, "betokens perfect obedi-

ence and unqualified devotion." The king now stopped before him.

"How do you know it was suicide?"

"I don't know. If it is Your Majesty's pleasure, the countess was drowned by others—"

"My pleasure? I? How?"

"I humbly beg Your Majesty's permission—may I tell all?"

"You must—!"

Summoning all his strength, Baum now said:

"Your Majesty, I found the shoes myself, but I got the hat from a man who is fit to do anything—the gend'arme thinks—that it may perhaps be good for the man—he might be pardoned at the end of a year and sent to America—a brother of his—is said to be—there—"

"You speak incoherently."

Baum regained his self-command.

"She may have been murdered by some poacher. The worst of it all is that she sent a letter to her majesty the queen."

"A letter to the queen! Where is it? Give it to me!"

"I haven't it, the maid snatched it from me."

The king sat down.

For a long while, not a sound was heard but the rapid ticking of the clock that stood on the writing-table.

The king arose from his seat and walked up and down the room. Then he came toward Baum, who felt as if the hour of judgment had come—as if his life hung in the balance. He tried to loosen his cravat; it seemed too tight for him. He almost felt as if a sword were passing through him.

"Do you know what was in the letter to the queen?"

"No, Your Majesty."

"Was it sealed?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"And have you nothing more?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; I was almost obliged to use violence to get this from the maid; and here, Your Majesty, there is something more. . . Beside the shoes, there was a pool of blood, and on this little plant there are drops of her blood."

A heart-rending cry of pain escaped the king; then, taking the letter and the plant with him, he went into the adjoining room.

Baum remained standing there waiting.

In the next room, the king sat reading, with tearful eyes.

"She loved me intensely. She was great and beautiful," said he to himself, with pale and trembling lips. His mind was filled with thoughts of her beauty, her voice, her gait, and all her varied charms. And were they all now dead?

The king looked at his hand; the hand which she had so fondly kissed. He took up the letter again and once more read the words: "To my friend." He knew not how it came about, but when he again became conscious of himself, he was kneeling by the chair.

What was to come next?

He remembered that the lackey was waiting in the cabinet. The king felt deeply humbled at the thought of his being obliged to take such a creature into his confidence; but had not men of all kinds long known of his crime? They knew of it, but were silent. A thousand eyes were upon him, a thousand lips were speaking—and all were telling this terrible story. The king looked about him, bewildered. He could scarcely rise. And among the many thousands who had laid their hands in his, and who looked up to him, there was one—Ah! how heavily her hand and her glance now weighed upon him. And her lips; what might they say?

How was he now to approach the queen? If she only knew his deep contrition, she would fall weeping on his neck; for she was divine goodness itself. And yet, how had he acted toward her!

He was on the point of sending Irma's last words to the queen. He meant to add some words expressive of his contrition—to lay bare his thoughts and feelings. It is best, thought he to himself, not to act precipitately, and when he was again on his feet, the consciousness of strength returned. One must be able to fulfill the most difficult duties, even that of repentance, without sacrificing dignity.

The king saw himself in the large mirror. He had for-

gotten that he was in hunting costume, and started at the reflection of himself, as though it were a stranger.

His face was pale, his eyes inflamed. He had shed tears for his friend, and that was enough. What, with some natures, requires months or years, great minds achieve in a few moments. Their years had become as ages. It seemed to him as if the words: "The kiss of eternity," were being wafted toward him on the air, and his mind was filled with memories of that day in the atelier of the ball, and—

"It was given to thee to live the highest life and then die; to force death to do your bidding. But I cannot do so. I do not live for myself alone!" said he, apostrophizing his friend, and feeling as if a new source of life flowed forth from the depths of his grief.

"And this is thy work," said an inner voice, while his thoughts were of the dead. "In all that's good, your spirit will ever abide with me. Without thee—I would confess it to God, were I now to appear before him—I should never have discovered the deepest springs of my being. If I only knew of some deed which could serve as a fit memorial of thy life."

The king again remembered that the lackey was waiting for him. He felt annoyed that there was not an hour he could call his own, in which to calm his agitated feelings, and, for the first time in his life, it flashed upon him: He who commands the services of others, has duties to them, too. They lead a life of their own, extending beyond the time and act of service.

The influence of Irma's last words seemed to hover over his soul like a mist.

He returned to his cabinet. Baum was still standing where he had left him, as silent and as quiet as if he were a chair or table.

"When did you leave there?" asked the king.

Baum told him all.

"You must be fatigued," said the king.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Well then, take a rest. Anything else you may know, you must tell no one but myself—do you understand?"

"Certainly, Your Majesty. I thank you, humbly."

The king had drawn a large emerald ring from his finger, and, while he turned it from side to side, the bright gem sparkled in the sunlight.

Baum thought that the king was about to bestow the ring upon him as a mark of his favor, but his majesty put the ring on again, and asked: "Are you married?"

"I was, Your Majesty."

"Have you any children?"

"An only son, Your Majesty."

"Very well. Hold yourself in readiness; I shall soon have further orders for you."

Baum went out. While hurrying through the ante-room, he graciously addressed the chamberlain with: "Pray don't rise!" There was no need that any one should see what was plainly to be read in every line of his face. The king had addressed him familiarly, and had even inquired about his family. He was, at last, the confidant of royalty; the highest honors now awaited him.

He went to his quarters in the side wing of the palace.

The king was alone. Naught was near him save Irma's hat and shoes. He gazed at them for a long while. What a poem it would make—to bring to the lover the shoes and the hat of his beloved—what a song it would be to sing in the twilight. Such were his thoughts and yet his brain whirled. With trembling hands, he took up the hat and shoes, and locked up the tokens of death in his writing-desk.

The feather on the hat broke as he closed the door. A light was burning on the writing-table. The king lit a cigar. When his eye fell on the water-color portrait of the queen, he started. He went on smoking violently.

It was not till some after that, that the king rang the bell and gave directions that the lord steward should be called, but that no one else should be admitted.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN the lord steward entered, the king had recovered his self-command and had settled upon the course he should pursue.

"Have you heard the terrible news?"

"I have, Your Majesty. The countess's maid has arrived; her mistress was drowned in the lake."

"And—?" asked the king, when he found the lord steward paused.

"And it is also said that, after her father's death, the countess neither saw nor spoke to any one. But she, nevertheless, wrote a few words to the queen, with the request that Doctor Gunther should deliver them."

"And was it done without previously informing me?"

The lord steward shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well; I know—" continued the king. "Is everything in readiness for the hunt?"

"At Your Majesty's pleasure. The hunting party has been waiting for an hour."

"I'm coming," said the king. "Send Doctor Sixtus to the lake and tell him to take Baum with him, for he knows all about the affair. Let him also take the notary with him, and tell him to see that the body, if found, be suitably interred. I know that you will have everything properly attended to; act on your own good judgment in the matter."

The king laid especial stress on the last words. Everything was to be managed discreetly; every appearance of undue interest, on his part, was to be avoided.

The king knit his brows, as if trying to think of something he had forgotten. "One thing more," added he, hastily. "Go to the poor countess's brother, and break the news to him as gently as you can. Should he desire leave of absence, you may inform him that it is granted for an indefinite time."

The king passed out through the anteroom and down the staircase. Rest and quiet had been prescribed for the queen, and, in order to avoid arousing her early in the morning, he had bade adieu to her the night before.

The hunting party assembled in the palace yard greeted the king, who graciously returned their salutation. In an instant, and as if by word of command, the covers were removed from the carriage-horses.

"Colonel Bronnen," exclaimed the king, "come sit with me."

Bronnen bowed in respectful acknowledgment of the

compliment, and stepped up to the king's carriage. The gentlemen of the party, amazed at the honor paid the colonel, got into their carriages. Bronnen had bowed respectfully—for the highest honor of the day had been conferred upon him—but there was a struggle within his heart. Had the king the faintest idea that Bronnen felt himself the avenger of old Eberhard, or that he was wrestling with himself as to whether or not he should take up the vendetta? He started when he involuntarily touched the hanger at his side. Was the royal carriage to be the scene of a tragedy, such as history had never yet known? Had Irma vauntingly told the king that he was a rejected suitor for her hand? and was he now to receive the alms of sympathy?

The party drove on into the open country. The king was silent for a long time. At last, he said:

"You were also a true friend of hers. There were few—indeed, there was no one—who she honored and esteemed as she did you. Her constant wish was that we should be more closely united."

Bronnen drew a long breath. There was no occasion for his saying anything. The king offered him his cigar case.

"Ah, you don't smoke," he said.

There was another long pause, which was at last broken by the king's asking:

"How long had you known Countess Irma?"

"From childhood. She was the friend of my cousin Emma, with whom she was at the convent."

"It comforts me to be able to speak to you of our friend. You understood her character. It was great, almost supernaturally so. Suffer me to inherit your friendship for her."

"Your Majesty—" replied Bronnen with constrained composure; for his heart was boiling with indignation at the man who had corrupted this noble creature and had driven her to self-destruction. But his military feeling of respect for his superiors held him in check.

"Ah, dearest Bronnen!" continued the king, "no death has ever affected me so. Did she ever speak to you of death? She hated it. And yet, when I look about me, all is life. When a great heart ceases to beat,

the whole world should pause, though it were but for a moment. What are we, after all?"

"Each of us is but a small, limited portion of the world. Everything about us has its due sphere of development and right. We are masters only of ourselves, and how few of us can claim to be even that!"

The king looked at Bronnen in surprise. Every one has a sphere of right— What could he have meant by it? Hastily collecting himself, the king replied: "She might have used the very same words. I can easily imagine how much you sympathized with each other. If I understand rightly, you regard suicide as the greatest of crimes?"

"If that which is most unnatural is, therefore, the greatest crime, I certainly do. 'Self-preservation is the first law of nature.' I shall never forget a conversation I had with old Count Eberhard, last winter, upon this very subject."

"Ah yes, you knew him. Was he really a great man?"

"He was a man of one idea, of grand one-sidedness. But perhaps this is a necessary condition of greatness."

"When did you speak with Countess Irma for the last time?"

"After her father's death, when she had shut herself up in impenetrable darkness. I spoke to her, but could not see her, although she extended her hand to me. I believe that I am the last man who held her hand in his."

"Then let me take your hand in mine!" exclaimed the king.

He held Bronnen's hand in his for a long time, until the latter said:

"Your Majesty, confession for confession.—I loved Irma!"

He spoke in a curt and bitter tone. The king hastily withdrew his hand.

"I see," continued Bronnen, gathering all his strength, "that the countess has mentioned nothing of my suit. I thank her, even now, for this proof of her noble, generous heart. Since she could not honestly return my love, she frankly declined it."

"You? my dear Bronnen!" exclaimed the king, in a

tone that betrayed his painful agitation. He could not help thinking of the happy life which, as the wife of this man, Irma might have led. "My poor friend!" he added, in a voice full of feeling.

"Yes, Your Majesty, I have a right to mourn with you, and it seems as if her powerful, all-embracing mind were still potent, and had caused Your Majesty to call me to your side."

"I never dreamt of such a thing. If I had, I would not have inflicted this pain upon you."

"And I thank Your Majesty for permitting me to share in your grief. Because I share it with you, I am able to comfort you; that is, as far as another can. Since Your Majesty is so frank with me, I must needs be as frank in return."

The king was silent for a long time. Although Bronnen had opened his heart to him, the immediate effect upon him was to rouse a deep feeling of jealousy. He could not brook the thought that another had dared to cast his eye upon Irma; aye, actually to woo her. She seemed no longer entirely his own, since another had stretched out his hand toward her.

Bronnen waited for the king's answer. He could not understand what his silence meant. Had the king repented of his frankness? Did it offend him to find that another had placed himself on a level with him and answered him frankly and fearlessly? The consciousness of royalty trenches upon that of manhood, and perhaps it never happens that a prince thinks of himself simply as a human being. Bronnen felt vexed at the king's silence and averted looks. He could stand it no longer and, at last, feeling that, at such a moment etiquette could be disregarded, he said:

"I think that few men are great-minded enough to keep all knowledge of their conquests to themselves."

This remark had a double meaning, and Bronnen would not have been surprised if the king had turned upon him with a crushing reply. He felt defiant and yet composed. The man to whom he had revealed his soul's secret, must not act as if nothing had happened; he must answer for himself.

The king still remained silent.

"Is Your Majesty not of my opinion?" asked Bronnen, trembling with emotion.

The king turned toward him.

"You are my friend. I thank you, and when we reach Wolfswinkel, you shall receive the highest proof of my confidence."

"There is something more which I think I ought to communicate to Your Majesty."

"Proceed."

"I think I can see the connection between certain recent events. During the late election for deputies, some friends of mine in the Highlands thought of me. They knew of my sincere devotion to my constitutional king."

The king's features betrayed the faintest expression of disgust, while Bronnen continued calmly:

"I informed the voters that I would never accept an election which would range me with the opposition. Count Eberhard was, therefore, proposed on the very last day, and, to the great surprise of all, accepted the nomination. In order to cast a stigma upon the father, the friends of the present ministry—I am now giving Your Majesty facts, not mere opinions—were not above introducing the relation between Countess Irma and yourself into the canvass."

The king threw his cigar away, and quickly said:

"Go on; tell me more!"

"Count Eberhard was elected in spite of them. While I was at Wildenort, to attend the funeral, I was informed that the first intimation he had received of his daughter's position was conveyed to him at the meeting of electors. On his way home, he received letters which affected him deeply. Nay more, for I have inquired into the matter. I found this piece of a torn letter on the road, and the laborer who worked there told me that the count had torn up letters at the time mentioned."

Bronnen handed him a paper on which stood the words: "Your daughter has fallen into disgrace, and yet stands in high grace as the king's mistress."

"That may have been written by our saintly Hippocrates," muttered the king to himself.

"I beg Your Majesty's pardon, but if you harbor the slightest suspicion against Doctor Gunther, you do him injustice. I will stake my honor for him, and time will show that I am right."

"Go on!" said the king impatiently. He felt displeased that Bronnen could read his very thoughts, as it were, and understand what he had only half muttered; and that, understanding it, he had not, as in duty bound, ignored it. He was only to hear what was directly addressed to him.

"On his return from the meeting," continued Bronnen, calmly, "Count Eberhard was attacked by a paralytic stroke which deprived him of the power of speech. During his last moments, Countess Irma was the only one with him. She was heard to utter a terrible cry—when they entered the room, she lay on the floor, and Count Eberhard was dead. Who knows what may have happened there! But whatever it may have been, I feel sure it was the cause that drove her to this terrible resolve."

"And what purpose does this ingenious combination serve?" asked the king.

Bronnen looked at him with astonishment.

"Its only purpose is to aid in clearing up the mystery."

The long pause which followed Bronnen's remark added to its impressiveness.

"Yes," said the king, resuming the conversation, "how much better it is to clear up all things! That was just her own way of doing; so natural, and yet so clear, so conscious, and yet so strong. Well be it so. Bronnen, why should I conceal it? I may tell you everything. I loved the countess. And now—I must say it, for the thought tortures me—I am almost angry at her. Her suicide has imposed a heavy life-burden upon me. I shall never, to the end of my days, be able to lay it aside. She must have known how it would weigh me down. Tell me, frankly—I beg of you, tell me—is this feeling not a justifiable one?"

"I am not addressing the king, now. I am speaking to the clear-headed, warm-hearted man."

Bronnen paused. It shocked the king to find himself thus divested of his inborn dignity. What would this stern man, whom he had ordered to forget his rank, say?

"Speak on!" said the king, encouragingly.

"Then I shall speak frankly," began Bronnen, "as between man and man. When you reproach yourself for feeling that your friend has aggrieved you in imposing this life-burden upon you, it is simply a proof that your true self has been deeply affected. What really torments you, however, is the ghost of your own act. Although our friend, who deserved so well of fate may, in a fine frenzy, have willingly sacrificed herself, the stern truth still confronts you: you invaded, nay destroyed, her sphere of right, and now you reap the inevitable consequence of what was then begun. The ghost of your own actions disturbs you and will continue to do so, until you perceive the truth. Every human being has its own rights, presenting a barrier which no one, however exalted his position, dare invade. When you fully realize this in yourself, and by your knowledge of sin have overcome sin, then, and not until then, will you be free—no matter what may have gone before. Superstition uses the formula: 'All good spirits praise the Lord,' with which to exorcise phantoms. Our good spirit is that inner perception of truth to which we appeal, or rather to whose appeal we give utterance."

There was a long pause. Bronnen's face glowed with excitement. The king was chilly, and wrapped himself in his mantle. His eyes were closed. At last he sat up and said:

"I thank her; she has given me a friend, a true man. You will remain to me."

The king's voice was hoarse. He wrapped his mantle yet more closely about him, lay back in the corner of the carriage, and closed his eyes. Not another word was uttered until they reached the hunting-seat. The king told his suite that he felt unwell and would not take part in the hunt. The rest of the party plunged into the forest, while the king remained alone with Bronnen.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was after breakfast. The queen, attended by the ladies of the court, was in the music room.

The first mist of early autumn obscured the landscape, and the morn gave promise of a lovely, bracing day.

Various journals were lying before the queen. She pushed them away, saying:

"How terrible these newspapers are! What license! This sheet is usually so unobjectionable; but even here it is stated that Count Wildenort died of grief because of the conduct of his unmarried daughter. Can such things be permitted? Was such a thing ever heard of—Ah, dear councilor!" added she, addressing her private secretary, "there's a sealed letter for Countess Irma on my desk upstairs. Let a messenger take it to her at once. If she could only be kept in ignorance of these terrible newspapers stories; I hope she may, at all events."

The ladies of the court were engaged with their embroidery. They replied their needles more nimbly than before and did not look up from their work.

Countess Brinkenstein was called away. After some time she returned, accompanied by the doctor.

"Ah, welcome!" cried the queen.

At a sign from Countess Brinkenstein, the ladies retired.

"How charming! you've come just in the nick of time," said the queen. I am just about to send off a letter for Countess Irma; you might add a few kind words."

"Your Majesty, Countess Irma will not be able to read your letter of condolence."

"Why not?"

"The countess is—very ill."

"Very ill? You say it in such a—not dangerously, I hope?"

"I fear so."

"Doctor! your voice—what is it? The countess is not—"

"Dead—!" said the doctor, covering his face with his hands.

For a few moments there was breathless silence in the great hall. At last the queen exclaimed:

"Dead! Was it grief at her father's death?"

The doctor nodded affirmatively.

The flower-table which Irma had painted stood by the queen's side. The queen looked at it for a long while. At last, completely forgetting those about her—her gaze still fixed upon the table which, now that she was weeping bitterly, was wet with her tears—she cried out, in heart-rending accents:

"Oh, how beautiful she was; how radiant her eyes, how bright her glance, how musical her voice! Her singing was like the warbling of the lark! And all this beauty, all this love and goodness is no more! I would love to see her, even in death. She must be beautiful, a very image of peace. And you say that she died of grief at her father's death; of a broken heart? Was it one great, convulsive throb of feeling that broke her ardent, noble heart? Oh, my sister—for I loved her as such—forgive me that even the shadow of doubt—Oh, my sister!—the lovely flowers on this table were conjured up by your hand—And you are faded, withered, decayed! You were lovelier than any flower! I can still see your eye, as it followed every stroke of the pencil. You meant to give me undying flowers, and as an undying flower you shall dwell in my heart."

Her tears fell on the marble flower-table. A little dog came up to her and she said:

"She decked you, too, with flowers. It was on my birthday. She sought to adorn everything that met her eye. And you loved her, too, poor Zephyr? every creature loved her, and now she's dead." She wept in silence for some time.

"May I wear mourning for my friend?" she inquired, looking up at Countess Brinkenstein.

"Your Majesty, it is not the custom for the queen to go into mourning alone."

"Of course; we are not alone. No, never! All must mourn with us; there must needs be a mourning livery."

She had spoken harshly, and now offered her hand to Countess Brinkenstein, as if in apology, and inquired:

"When is she to be buried, and where? I should like to lay the most beautiful garland upon her grave. I will go to her myself, and my tears shall drop upon her pale face. So fair a life, and so sudden an end! Can it be possible? I must go to her!"

Her eyes seemed fixed on vacancy, while she asked:

"Has the king gone hunting?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"He, too, will weep, for he loved her as if she were his sister. I know it."

The look which Countess Brinkenstein now gave the doctor seemed to say: "I never gave the queen credit for so much tact and self-command. How naturally she acts, while trying to make us believe that she never knew or suspected that aught was wrong."

"I will go to her!" suddenly exclaimed the queen. "No one shall prevent it. I will go to her and stand by her coffin, by her grave."

Countess Brinkenstein stared at the queen.

The doctor approached and said:

"Your Majesty cannot see the countess. Grief for her father's death affected her mind—"

"Then she's not dead?"

"The countess has undoubtedly drowned herself in the lake."

The queen cast a look of horror at the doctor. She attempted to speak, but could not. Gunther added:

"She has not left us without a farewell; she left a letter, which I am to deliver to Your Majesty. It must surely be intended to atone for the frightful tidings; even in her last moments, she was true to her affectionate nature."

The queen stared at Gunther vacantly. She tried to rise, but could not. She mutely motioned him to give her the letter. Gunther handed it to her.

The queen read it and turned pale as a corpse. Her features grew rigid; her hands fell to her side, as if palsied; her eyes closed, an expression as of death lay on her lips. Presently, she shook as if in a chill, and then her face became flushed, as if burning. She sprang to her feet and exclaimed:

"No! no! Have you done this? Could you act thus, Irma? You—"

She fell back in her chair, covered her face with both hands, and exclaimed:

"And she kissed my child, and he kissed it! Oh, they kissed that which was purest of all, well knowing how impure their own lips were. They talked in the loftiest strain, and yet the words did not cut their tongues like sharp knives! Oh, how disgusting! How disgusting, how tainted everything seems! How I loathe myself! And he dared to tell me that a prince could have no private actions, for his deeds are an example to others. Shame! shame! Everything is vile, everything is despicable! Everything!"

She looked around, bewildered. She was as terrible in her indignation as she had been beautiful in her grief.

With vacant gaze she regarded every object that had once met Irma's eye, and when her glance again fell upon the flower-table, she turned away with a convulsive start, as if serpents had darted from the flowers. Again she exclaimed:

"Oh, how loathsome! Oh, how vile, how disgusting! I beg of you, leave me alone! May I not be alone?"

"Let me remain with Your Majesty," said the Doctor, taking her hand, which hung as if lifeless at her side.

Countess Brinkenstein withdrew.

For a long while, the queen did not speak a word. She seemed to be staring at vacancy, breathed heavily and would, at times, start convulsively. She was suddenly seized with a chill, and fell back insensible.

The doctor bathed her forehead and wrists with a few drops of some restorative, and then called her maid. Accompanied by the latter, he conducted the queen to her apartments, and ordered that she should be put to bed.

"I shall never again see the light of day, nor a human face; and he—and he!" cried she; then she forced her lace handkerchief into her mouth and tore it to pieces with her teeth.

She lay thus for some time, the doctor sitting silently by her bedside.

At length she heaved a deep sigh, opened her eyes, and said:

"I thank you, but I would like to sleep."

"Yes, do so," said the doctor. He was about to leave, but she called to him:

"One word more. Does the king know—?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"And he went to the hunt?"

"He is king, Your Majesty."

"I know, I know!—Anything to avoid creating a sensation. Yes, yes."

"I beg of you, Your Majesty, don't think now. Don't worry about anything. Try to sleep."

"We can give ourselves the sleep eternal, but not temporal sleep."

"I entreat you, Your Majesty: don't give way to this violent excitement; do try to sleep."

"I will, I will. Good-night! Give me a sleeping draught, a drop of forgetfulness. Poison were better! Good-night!"

The doctor withdrew, but, by a faint gesture, signified to Madame Leoni, the woman in waiting, that he should remain in the next room.

CHAPTER V.

IT was silent and lonely at the hunting-seat in the Highlands. The walls of the great hall were hung with antlers; a stuffed boar's head stared from over the entrance. A bright fire was burning on the large hearth, for here among the mountains it was already cold. The king sat before the fire, staring at the blazing embers. The flames, intertwining, would leap on high, like so many tongues of fire. The king left his chair several times, but soon sat down again.

Under the antlers hung tablets marking the year and date of each hunt. A long line of ancestors had contributed to these proofs of victory. If all the guns that had been used in achieving these triumphs were to be fired off at the same moment; if, in addition to this, every horn

that had been blown, every dog which had barked, and every creature that had cheered, were to find voice, the din thus produced could not be more confusing or bewildering than the thoughts which jostled each other in the head that now rested upon the king's hands.

He arose from his seat and read some of the inscriptions on the wall. He could boast of a mighty ancestry. They were of a lusty and powerful race, and while indulging in the pleasures of the chase and the social board, would speedily have forgotten an adventure like the one that now unnerved him.

Have we become weaker, pettier, more timid?

The king seated himself again and gazed at the fire. He was angry with himself, and yet could not master his weakness.

We are not like the men of the olden time, with their rude simplicity and fearless disregard of consequences. Why have we not inherited the strength of our ancestors, instead of mere pride in their power?

What has happened?

Unfaithfulness cannot be blotted out, nor can the dead be called back to life.

The memory of the days passed in intoxicating happiness rose up before him, as if to say: It dare not, it cannot be.

Has she a right, while destroying her life, to destroy mine, too? And she has destroyed it. Her death will ever remain an inseparable part of myself. I bear a corpse about with me. The guilt of murder dwells within my heart!

He suddenly held his hands before the fire, for they were cold. The flames burned brightly, but they did not warm his hands, and his heart seemed freezing.

Is Bronnen right in refusing to see anything in this terrible affair but the inevitable results of my actions?

He uttered a short laugh, for it had suddenly occurred to him that the world would present a wondrous chaos of bloodshed and murder, if every similar misstep were to produce like result. How many thousands—

A few words uttered on a lovely morning and during happy times, floated through his mind. It was like sud-

denly recollecting a long forgotten melody. It was scarcely more than a year ago, that the queen had said, while sitting under the weeping ash: "He who commits a wrong sins for himself, and as deeply as if it were the first time the sin were ever committed."

Ah! why is it that our actions fall so far short of our ideal?

The king was still gazing into the fire. The image of his wife, fading from his mind, was replaced by that of the friend, whom, in fancy, he followed to the bottom of the lake.

He hastily arose, opened the window, inhaled the bracing mountain air and looked out into the dark night.

There, wrapped in slumber, lies the world, the palace with its rich and varied life, your wife, your child; and beyond, as far as the eye can reach, the rich land over which you rule. And while millions of beings cry to you in their hour of need, are you to be dragged down by one mortal?

The king turned round, with the intention of sending for Bronnen.

It is not well to give one's-self up to solitude and the company of evil spirits.

And yet he hesitated. From out of the darkness, there rose a demon with a thousand glittering, cunning eyes. He had known him from youth and his name was—distrust. Who knows that this gentleman, with his high-sounding phrases, is not availing himself of your humility and the tender mood which has unmanned you, for his own selfish ends? for all men are selfish, especially when dealing with royalty. He means to rule me and, through me, the country. Who knows whether he ever loved her or declared his passion to her. She neither could nor would have dared conceal that from me. The story was a ready invention of his, intended to make him my companion in grief. But I know no companion. I will have none. If I cannot do all by myself, I am not a king, and if I am not a king, what am I? No, my wise and noble-hearted gentleman—

An inner voice admonished him that it was wrong to judge Bronnen as he judged other men, but he would not

listen to it. He drew himself up as if conscious of his power and dignity. Suddenly, a sound from the forest broke upon his ear. It was the first wild, mournful cry of the stag. The huntsman in him was now aroused. His hand quickly sought his weapon, but the thought vanished with the swiftness of the stag's flight through the forest, and gave way to another that raised a smile on the king's countenance. The stag, thought he, was crying to him. Nature knows nothing of such unfaithfulness as that with the thought of which you are now tormenting yourself. The laws of nature do not recognize unfaithfulness; it is simply a violent and arbitrary creation of man. But neither does nature's law recognize a king, or the right of any creature to rule others of the same species. But it is not nature alone that directs human life. There is also another law that dwells within man. At the birth of each beast, the law of its life seems born anew. Man, however, inherits that which has gone before, for he has a history. And a king more than all others—

The king stood there in silence for a long time. Feeling chilled again, he closed the window and sat down before the fire in which the embers were still burning. Although he found it irksome to be alone, he yet forced himself to remain so.

The fire was still flickering, and now and then a sharp tongue of flame would dart forth. The king's hand still clasped the silver handle of the tongs long after the fire had ceased to burn. For the first time in his life, he felt conscious of a void within himself—a void which could not be filled. What could it be? Hunting or drilling, jesting or commanding, loving or ruling, none of these filled the aching void. What could it be? this constant unrest, this longing for something that was yet to come.

He had spent a happy youth. The free tone at his father's court had not affected him. He had lived in an ideal world. He was on his travels and far away from home, when the sudden news of his father's death reached him. He had hardly arrived at man's estate, when he was called to the throne. Others might test their affections, might choose—his consort had been selected for

him—there was no wooing; a throne, a country, a wife were given to him. His wife was graceful and pretty. He was fond of her, and she loved him intensely. Suddenly Irma entered their circle, and the husband, the father, the king, became seized with ardent love. And now she was dead, destroyed by her own rash deed.

Is it still possible for you to subordinate yourself to the law?

You have submitted to it reluctantly, as if it were a clog and a fetter; but it is not submission to the law the highest, aye, the only source of indestructible power? Yes, there is an eternal law that binds you to your wife and to your people; in that alone dwells the life eternal.

He was filled with the thought. It was like a deliverance; like the first free breathing of the convalescent. He could not fully grasp the idea, and yet it seemed to him as if he must cry aloud: I am free! free and yet in accord with the law.

He rose quickly. He meant to send for Bronnen, but restrained himself. He had wrestled with himself and would now bear this within himself. He felt as if the aching void, the restless longing for change, had suddenly been filled. He pressed his hand to his throbbing heart.

He rang the bell and sent word to Bronnen that he might retire. He sent his body-servant away and retired to his room alone.

Bronnen had been waiting for hours, expecting to be sent for at any moment, and was now busy conjecturing why this had not been done.

Could Irma's death have had more than a mere passing influence upon the king, or had it really helped to reconcile him with the law of life? What proof of his confidence did the king mean to bestow upon him? And when Bronnen had waited for hours, without receiving a message from the king, he could not repress a feeling of resentment. Who could tell? Perhaps the king had forgotten him? He had joined him for a while in a plaintive duet; but now all was over. That piece had been played and, as with a concert programme, a new one was to come.

One of old Eberhard's sayings occurred to him.

"When you are not in the presence of royalty," were the old man's words, "it esteems you as little better than the servants who wait out in the vestibules, or on the steps, with warm mantles for their masters. They go on playing, dancing, laughing and jesting; but which of them stops to think of those who are waiting outside, who have aching legs and are overcome with sleep. But, nevertheless, there you must be, and that without a murmur."

He felt a touch of Eberhard's deep scorn. He, too, was a servant, who, while waiting in the ante-chamber, had been forgotten by his master.

When, at a late hour, the king sent him word that he might retire, he nodded his thanks. He has remembered you after all, thought he to himself. Many thanks. Of course they would be less ashamed of a companion in crime.

CHAPTER VI.

THE mountains were still covered with the mists of morning, when the king sent for Colonel Bronnen.

The latter entered with a respectful air. The king advanced toward him and said:

"Good-morning, dear Bronnen!" His voice was hoarse; he looked pale and unrefreshed. He took a sheet of paper from the table and said:

"There is the proof that I promised you. Read it."

Bronnen read it and looked at the king in astonishment.

"Do you know the handwriting?" asked the king.

"I do not recognize the handwriting, but the great mind seems familiar. I believe—"

"You are right—they are the last words that our lost friend left for me."

With a certain air of solemnity, Bronnen again placed the letter upon the table. He did not venture to say a word.

"Be seated; I see that you are agitated."

"Certainly, Your Majesty; but, in spite of everything, these lines only confirm my presentiment."

"Your presentiment?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; a presentiment that Countess Irma is not dead."

"Not dead? and why?"

"I know not what to say, but the proofs that were found in the lake and on the shore serve rather to confirm than refute my theory. They are too complete—"

"You loved our friend, I believe it," said the king; "but you did not fully understand her. Countess Irma was incapable of deceit; and have I not told you that boatmen saw the body of a woman floating in the lake?"

"Who knows what they may have seen? Nothing has been found as yet."

"On what do you base your presentiments?"

"It is fully consistent with my exalted opinion of that great woman, to conceive of her having withdrawn to some convent, in order to leave Your Majesty free. Yea, free and true."

"Free and true," said the king, repeating the words to himself. "You utter words which seem irreconcilable, and yet they must be reconciled. Bronnen, you mean to show me a new life-path, and to remove the corpse that obstructs the way, so that, relieved of my burden, I may pass on. But I have strength to listen to the whole truth, and to decline all soothing deceit."

"Your Majesty, I have addressed you in all frankness, and with an utter disregard of all other considerations."

The king nodded gently, and Bronnen added:

"Be that as it may, these lines are the utterance of a great soul, and the realization of these thoughts is an end worth dying for. Now, Your Majesty, the weight must be lifted from your soul. Your friend's death or disappearance has not imposed a burden upon you; it has liberated you. For the sake of our country and the realization of the highest laws, she has departed."

"Free and true," said the king again, in a low voice. "I would like, this very day, to change the legend on my coat of arms and replace it with those words. But I will prove—and to you alone do I confess it—I will prove that they dwell within me! Yes, my friend, I read those lines many a time during the night. When they first appealed to me yesterday, I did not understand them; but

now I do. Let us, as long as we live, quietly celebrate the memory of this day. You uttered an expression yesterday that startled, nay, offended me."

"Your Majesty!"

"Calm yourself. You see we are friends. I promise you never again to allow my displeasure to last over night."

"What expression?"

"It was 'constitutional king'; and while, last night, I read this letter again and again, that phrase was ever between the lines. Can one be a sovereign and yet subject to the law? Mark me, Bronnen; if I were in the presence of Eternal God, I could not open my heart more freely. This expression of yours and our friend's appeal aroused me. Can I remain a sovereign, a complete man and king, and at the same time be fettered? At last I understood it. She says: 'Be one with the law, with your wife and your people.' Is there free love in marriage? Can there be a free king in a constitutional government! There lies the difficulty. But I have conquered it. Fidelity is love awakened to itself. The life I lead, my crown, my wife, indeed all that I possess, became mine by virtue of my rank. Last night, I earned the right to call them mine. To be able, in all moods, to hold fast to what has, heretofore, only been the result of impulse; to infuse new life into one's actions, and to feel that they are in accord with one's self—Ah, you can have no idea of the spirits I wrestled with; but I conquered at last. 'Free and true,' is my motto for evermore."

Bronnen was deeply agitated, and, in his enthusiasm, rushed toward the king.

"I have never bent the knee to human being, but now I should like to—"

"No, my friend," cried the king. "Come to my heart. Let us, holding fast to one another, act and work together. I will prove that a king can act freely, and that his freedom and his friendship are something more than a mere fairy ideal. Yesterday, I felt as if you were my father-confessor. It does me good to say this. I have come to know that the man whose hand and heart are impure is unfit to labor for the highest and noblest

ends. There is no greatness which is not based on true morality, and, in uttering these words, I utter a verdict upon my past life. I am not ashamed to acknowledge to you, what I have already said to myself. And now let us, as men, consider what is best to be done."

Bronnen's countenance seemed illumined with a ray of purest joy.

"A bright, unclouded spirit is with us."

"Let her memory be held in honor."

"I do not mean her," said Bronnen. "When I spoke to Count Eberhard, he said: 'Honor pledges us to morality; fame, still more so; and power, most of all.'"

The king and Bronnen discussed many other topics. With his friend, the king could frankly and unreservedly show the change which had taken place in him. But with the world, the court, and the country at large, it behooved him to avail himself of more gradual methods. A king dare not publicly repent.

Bronnen was, in secret, appointed prime minister.

They remained at the hunting-seat and joined in the chase. They deemed it best to postpone their return to court long enough to permit certain matters to settle themselves in the mean while.

CHAPTER VII.

"**H**IS MAJESTY desires me to assure you of his sincere sympathy, and to say that if you wish to go away in order to arrange your family affairs, to pursue investigations at the lake, or to divert your thoughts by travel, you are at liberty to do so. Leave of absence, for an indefinite period, will be sent after you."

These were the words with which the lord steward, who had been sent to inform Bruno of his sister's death, concluded his message. He pressed Bruno's hand, kissed him on both cheeks, and left.

As soon as he was out of doors the lord steward fanned himself with his pocket-handkerchief. The dread task which had fallen to his lot had greatly agitated him, but still he could not help admitting that Bruno had received the terrible news with great composure,

While the lord steward remained in the room, Bruno had sat on a sofa in the corner covering his face with his handkerchief, and listening quietly and patiently to it all, as if it were the news of some strange, remote event that in no way affected him.

But now he was alone again. He sat silent for awhile, unconsciously playing with a scented note which he had received a little while before.

Suddenly, he sprang from his seat as if crazed, seized a chair and broke it. This seemed to do him good. Then, as if possessed by a demon, he threw himself on the floor and lay there, raving, writhing, and screaming fearfully.

The servant entered and, finding his master lying on the floor, lifted him up.

"I'm ill!" said he. "No, I'm not ill! I won't be ill! Go at once to chamberlain Von Ross or to intendant Von Schoning, and request one of those gentlemen to come to me directly. If my wife inquires for me, say that I've gone out with the master of the household."

The servant went away and Bruno stood at the window, looking out into the street. The mist had disappeared and now revealed the park in all its beauty. The gardener was removing the pots that contained faded flowers, and replacing them with fresh ones. Arabella's pet greyhound was sitting on the gravel path; it looked up at its master and, in token of its joy, jumped about and ran around the arbor.

Although Bruno saw it all, he was thinking of something quite different.

"Ha ha!" he laughed, "I never thought that this world was anything but an empty farce. He who frets away an hour is a fool. Now I am quite free," said he, drawing himself up, "quite free. Now there is no one on earth for whom I need care. World, I am free and alone! And now for seventy years to come, give me all thy pleasures! Thou canst not harm me! I trample everything under foot!"

He stopped to listen—but no one came.

Bruno had always lived in society, but had never passed any time in the society of his own thoughts. Now, when

he was lonely and in mourning they came to him—neglected-looking companions with an eager air and merry glances—and cried: "Leave it all; come with us! Let us be merry! What avails your grieving? You will be old before your time."

He stood before a mirror, and they said to him: "See how horrible you look."

He could not rid himself of his companions. They played merry dances; they jingled their gold and cried: "va banque"; they rattled the glasses and showed him voluptuous and seductive forms, and he could hear rude and wanton laughter. They filled the room; they seized him and wanted to dance about with him; but he stood firm, clenching his fists and unable to go. And then they cried to him: "We know you! You are a silly boy and care for what the world thinks. You have no courage! Cheer up! Let them taunt you, but be merry, nevertheless. The day you lose in fretting, no one can ever give back to you. Fie! at this begging for sympathy! Go about and say: 'I'm a poor man, my father's dead and my sister drowned herself.' Get some one to make a song for you, and another to paint a little sign, and wander about from fair to fair, asking for an alms. Fie! fie! You must do one thing or the other: despise the world, or let it pity you. Which do you choose? How often have you said: 'I despise the world'—and what makes you afraid? You are sitting there, and would like to go out; who closes the door? who has tied your horse's feet? You are alone. The dear friends, the kind-hearted beings, the sympathizing souls, will come and say: 'Be firm; be a man; conquer your grief!' And what will the dear souls do for you? They will give you the alms of sympathy and then leave you in solitude, while they go their way in search of pleasure. As long as there is playing, dancing, drinking, they are true and enduring friends; but no feast will be put off for your sake, nothing will be changed. If you mean to enjoy the world you must despise mankind. They merely say to you: 'Be a man'—but be one."

His thoughts worked him into a frenzy. The next few days seemed a yawning unfathomable abyss staring him in

the face. All was empty, void, hollow, joyless, consuming solitude.

He was at last released, for the servant entered and announced the intendant.

They had not been great friends, but now Bruno embraced the intendant as if he were the only friend he had in the world, and lay on his neck sobbing and begging him not to abandon him to solitude. He raged and raved and, with a strange mixture of blasphemy and mockery, reviled his fate. "Oh, the terrible days that await me!" he exclaimed vehemently.

"Time heals all wounds," said the intendant.

"But to pass weeks, aye months, in mourning!" cried Bruno again.

The intendant started. He had received an insight into this man's character. What grieved him most was the long period during which he would have to seem to be in mourning.

It could not have happened at a more unfavorable time.

Bruno had entered two of his best horses for the races which were to come off in a few days. He had intended to ride Zuleika himself in a trotting match, and, for the great hurdle race, he had carefully trained Fitz, his groom. The name was really Fritz, but Fitz sounded better. Fitz, Baum's son, was a thorough rascal, in whom his father took great pride. His future was assured, for there was no doubt that if Fitz did not break his limbs, he would be the first jockey in the stables. He sat his horse like a cat, and it was impossible to throw him.

The weather was charming. There were just enough clouds to shield one from the burning rays of the sun, and during the night there had been a gentle rain which had improved the course. Fitz, in his green and white suit, would surely win the first prize. Bruno was not a little proud of Fitz's livery. He had, as it were, divided him in two, from the crown of his head to his feet his dress was grass-green on the right and snow-white on the left. What a pity that there are but seven cardinal colors, thus affording so little chance to indulge one's love of variety. But still, persistence can accomplish much, and while Bruno held his handkerchief before his face, he smiled

at the thought of Fitz with one boot green and the other white.

"Of course, I shan't ride," he said to the intendant. "Do you think I ought to allow my jockey to do so? I may do that; may I not?" he hastily added, as if fearing a negative reply. "They would think it mean of me, if I didn't. I have a large amount staked on the race. I shall let Fitz ride. Yes, I must; there's no harm in that."

He had scarcely finished speaking, when Fitz entered the room. In a harsh voice Bruno told him to go away. He was determined to act as though he had forgotten all about the races. That would prove his sorrow far more effectually than if he were to withdraw his engagement. He would submit to the fine for non-appearance, and the world would thus perceive that his grief was deep enough to make him forget everything.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE intendant sat on the sofa with Bruno. He held Bruno's hand in his—it was hot with fever.

Now that he had found the key to Bruno's character and present mood, he knew what was meant when the mourner exclaimed:

"I know how it is in the world. To-day and to-morrow there is hunting at Wolfswinkel; and day after to-morrow, the races. I am only surprised that I didn't forget everything in that one hour. His excellency Von Schnabelsdorf is now 'intellectualizing' with the handsome wife of ambassador Von N——. After that comes guard-mounting, and, this evening, there will be a *banque* at Prince Arnold's.—Ah! the world goes on in its beaten track. If I could only forget it; for it forgets me.—Who has a thought for the solitary mourner? Oh, forgive me, my beloved, my only friend in this world. You will stay with me. You will never, never leave me. Don't leave me alone, or I shall go mad?"

The intendant felt sincere pity for the poor man. He had been invited to dine with the master of the horse, and merely wished to leave for a few moments in order to pre-

sent his excuses in person. But Bruno would not permit him to go, and induced him to send his excuse in writing.

"Of course I'll stay with you," said the intendant consolingly. "At such moments, the presence of a friend is like a light in the night, obliging or, at all events, enabling one to see surrounding objects; it teaches us that the world has not yet ceased to exist, and that we do wrong to bury ourselves in solitude."

"Oh, you understand me! Tell me what to do, what to begin? I know nothing. I am like a child that has lost its way in the dark woods."

"Yes, that you are."

Bruno started. The intendant's confirmation of his opinion of himself rather displeased him.

"I am so weak now," said he. "Just think of what I've had to suffer during the last few days."

There was a strange mixture of gentleness and bitterness in his tone.

"May I smoke?" he asked.

"Certainly. Do anything that pleases you."

"Ah, no, nothing pleases me. And yet I should like to smoke."

He lit a cigar.

The world had, however, not quite forgotten him, as he had said in his anger. A visitor was announced. He hurriedly put the cigar away. The world was not to see him smoking, and was not to imagine that he was unfeeling, or that he did not mourn for his father and sister.

There were many visitors, and Bruno was again and again obliged to display his grief and to accept the sympathy offered him. He now saw how the rumor of Irma's death had spread throughout the city, from the palace to the hovel. People whom he hardly knew, and others who were even ill-disposed toward him, came. He was obliged to receive all politely, to thank them, and to accept their assurances of sympathy, while he fancied he could detect malicious pleasure in many an eye. But he was obliged to ignore this and, although now and then a nervous twitching of his features almost betrayed him, he managed to keep up the semblance of all-absorbing grief.

His companions in pleasure also visited him, and it was

quite curious to witness the grave air which the young cavaliers assumed, now and then casting a glance at the great mirror in order to see whether the serious expression became them well.

It seemed almost comical to think that the man who was always the merriest in the party, and who could make the best and most unequivocal jokes, should now be so downcast. They seated themselves; they straddled the chairs and rested their arms on the backs; they lit their cigars, and much was said of their respective "papas."

"My papa has been dead this two years."

"My papa is ill."

"My papa intends to retire on his pension."

Some one asked: "Bruno, how old was your father?"

He did not know, but answered at a venture:

"Sixty-three."

They also spoke of the races; at first cautiously and almost in a whisper, but afterward in a loud voice. They spoke of Baron Wolfsbuchen's great loss.

"What happened to him?"

"Fatima, his splendid black mare, wouldn't obey him, and he struck her over the mouth with his sword. He had forgotten that the blade was sharp."

They spoke of the loss that he had incurred by forfeiting the stakes, and of the damage done his horse; but no one found fault with his cruelty.

At last his comrades left. As soon as they were out of doors, they stretched themselves. "Well, well; that's over." A visit of condolence is a sort of funeral parade, and one's words are like muffled drums. Before they left the carpeted staircase, they began to whisper scandal, and to tell that Bruno had forbidden his mother-in-law to come to the capital, as their majesties had been gracious enough to stand as sponsors to his young scion. The whole party concluded to lunch together, and have some wine. There were merry goings on at the French restaurant, and Bruno was often the topic of conversation.

"He will be enormously rich, for he inherits a double share."

"If he had known as much a year ago, who knows whether he would have married Steigeneck. His debts

were not so heavy but that he could have held out for another year."

"He also inherits his sister's jewels, and they are of immense value."

As if he were two beings in one, the one here and the other there, Bruno's thoughts followed the companions who had left him.

He surmised what they were saying, and once started as if he had heard laughing behind him. It was nothing, however, but his sister's parrot, which he had ordered to be brought into his anteroom. He had it taken back to Irma's apartment, as he did not know whether it really belonged to her, and its eternal "God keep you, Irma," annoyed him.

He walked about the room for a long while, with his thumbs stuck into his closely buttoned coat, and his fingers playing a merry but inaudible tune upon his breast. The visits of condolence really annoyed him. It is so irksome to put on a sorrowful look, to listen to words of consolation, to offer thanks for sympathy, while all is a lie or, at most, an empty form— It is simply one's duty to express sympathy with the afflicted. Perhaps people regret that they cannot, in such cases, send their empty carriages, as they do at funerals— Is it not enough to let the world know what that the grief was great and general, and that the funeral was a large one? These were Bruno's angry and ill-natured thoughts. "Then they go off," thought he, "the young and the old, in uniform and in citizen's dress, twisting their mustaches and stroking their chins, with a self-complacent air, while they say to themselves: 'You've done a good deed; you are a man of politeness and feeling—' and when they get home they tell their wives and daughters: 'The king's aid-de-camp is thus and so—' and then they eat and drink and drive out, and when they reach the house they say: 'We ought to feel satisfied when everything goes well with us, and our family escapes misfortune.' They use the misfortunes of others as they would a platform, from which to get a better view of their own prosperity." Bruno's fingers moved yet more quickly than before—death, grief, sickness were intended for the lower orders, and not for

the higher classes. The world is miserably arranged after all, since there is no preservative against such ills, and since one cannot purchase immunity from them.

His excellency Von Schnabelsdorf also came. Bruno hated him at heart, for it was he who had invented the sobriquet of "Miss Mother-in-law" for Baroness Steigeneck, the whilom dancer. Bruno, however, felt obliged to act as if he knew nothing of it, to take his hand in the most polite and grateful manner, and to receive a kiss from the lips which had put a stigma upon his family; for Von Schnabelsdorf stood highest at court, and Bruno could not do without his friendship, which was doubly necessary, now that his main support, his sister, had been taken from him.

Thus Bruno felt annoyed at the visits of condolence he received, as well as at those which were withheld. The world was considerate enough to refrain from alluding to anything more than Irma's sudden and unfortunate death; how she was thrown from her horse and fell into the lake. The vice-master of the horse maintained that Pluto had never properly been broken in. Bruno, himself, behaved as if he really believed that Irma had met with her death by accident.

But it seemed as if he delighted to picture to himself the scene of the suicide, and to think of Irma at the bottom of the lake, held fast to the rocks by her long hair. He could not banish the awful picture, and at last threw open the window, so that he might divert himself with external objects.

Bruno did not care to eat or drink anything; the intendant could only induce him to take some food, by ordering dinner for himself. Bruno felt obliged to sit down with him, and, at every mouthful, he said: "I can't eat." At last, however, he ordered some champagne.

"I must build a fire in my engine!" said he, gnashing his teeth, while he thrust the bottle into the wine-cooler. "I derive as little pleasure from this as the engine does from the coals."

He drank down the wine hastily, and went on eating with a woe-begone expression, as if he would, at any moment, burst into tears.

He ordered more champagne.

"Did you see that?" said he, looking out of the window. His eyes were inflamed. "There's Kreuter, the merchant, riding Count Klettenheim's chestnut gelding. They must have played high last night, that the count should give up his horse; why, it's the pride of his life, his honor. What is Klettenheim without his gelding. A mere cipher, a double zero. Ah, my dear friend, excuse me! I am feverish, I am ill. But I won't be ill! I shall say nothing more. Go on; say whatever you please."

The intendant had nothing to say. He felt as ill-at-ease as if he were shut up in a dungeon with a maniac.

"I wish to speak with lackey Baum," cried Bruno suddenly. The intendant was obliged to dispatch a telegram to the summer palace, asking that Baum should be sent to the king's aid-de-camp.

Bruno let down the curtains, ordered lights and more wine, and gave orders that no one should be admitted. The intendant was in despair, but Bruno exclaimed:

"My dear friend, everything on earth is suicide, with this difference, however—here, one can always come to life again. The hour one kills is the only one that is rightly spent."

The intendant feared an outbreak of delirium, but Bruno was not one of those cavaliers who have only as much mind as the champagne they have just tossed down inspires them with, and who, at best, can only write a gallant billet-doux or devise a witty impropriety. At other times, Bruno would have laughed at the man who would ask him to adopt a system as his own, and yet he now asserted that he had one, and, filling his glass again, exclaimed: "Yes, my friend; there are only two kinds of human beings in the world."

"Men and women?" said the intendant, who thought it best to fall in with his vein, in order more easily to divert him from it.

"Pshaw!" interrupted Bruno. "Who is speaking of such things? Listen, my friend; the two human species are those who enjoy and those who suffer. He who lives for so-called ideas—for the good, the beautiful, the true. The man with an ideal may sacrifice his life, or be burnt

at the stake. It is his duty. His life is a short and uneventful one, but is compensated by the long and enduring remembrance in which he is held by posterity. That balances the reckoning. Is it not so?"

The intendant was obliged to assent. What could he do?

"And the second species," added Bruno, "includes ourselves—those who enjoy. The best thing in the world is enjoyment without consequences. After I have been smoking, gaming or listening to music, I can do anything; nothing disturbs me then. Other pleasures unfortunately have consequences. One ought to have no family—no family—by all means, no family."

Bruno suddenly burst into tears. The intendant was at a loss how to help him, and reproached himself for not having induced Bruno to refrain from drinking and talking. Bruno threw his head back, and the intendant wrapped a piece of ice in a handkerchief and laid it on his forehead.

"Thanks!" said Bruno, closing his eyes; "thanks!"

He was soon asleep.

The servant entered. Bruno awoke. The intendant drew aside the curtains and opened the windows. It was high noon.

Word came that Baum had already started off with Doctor Sixtus, the court physician. "Then we will go without them," said Bruno, who had regained his composure.

"We?"

"You see, my grief makes me think that I have already told you everything. We must go to the lake to look for traces of my unfortunate sister. Have I really said nothing of this to you before?"

"No—but I am at your service. I will ask for leave of absence for myself and for you, too."

"There's no need of that. His majesty has already offered it to me. Your Majesty is very gracious—very. Do you think we serve you? Ha, ha! we only serve you because we can enjoy ourselves better, and in more varied ways, at your court. You are our host, and do not mind stealthily taking a tit-bit yourself, behind the bar—I beg

of you, my dear friend—what did I say? You heard nothing—did you? It was delirium! I am growing mad! I must go out! Let us start this very day!"

The intendant consented and left him for an hour, in order to arrange various matters before his departure.

Bruno ordered his trunks to be packed, and gave instructions that two saddle-horses should be sent to the lake at once.

CHAPTER IX.

BRUNO was standing in his room, surrounded by luggage of various shapes, when a servant announced his gracious mother-in-law.

"She here? And in spite of my prohibition?" thought he to himself. "Show her in," he said to the servant, who quickly threw open the folding-doors, and closed them again when the lady had entered. "Ah, my dear mother!" exclaimed Bruno, who was about to hurry forward to embrace her, but she coolly offered him her hand and said:

"No, no," and then, seating herself on a sofa, she continued:

"Draw near; take a seat."

"Do you know—?" inquired Bruno.

"I know all; you need tell me nothing."

"I thank you for coming to offer me your sympathy."

"I'm delighted—I meant to say that I feel comforted to find you so composed. Arabella knows nothing as yet?"

"No."

"Nor need she know of it.—What is the meaning of all this luggage?"

Bruno looked at her in astonishment. Who had any right to inquire, and in such a tone? "I'm going on a journey," he answered bluntly, and then, in order to prevent a scene, he added in a gentle tone: "As her brother, I must make inquiries in regard to the accident."

"I approve of that; it's quite proper," replied the Baroness. "Have you already had an understanding with him!—You don't seem to understand me, as you don't answer; I mean with this king."

"Yes," replied Bruno boldly, "but I have pledged my word to let it go no further."

"Very well, I respect your discretion; but now, a frank word with you. Please close the *portière*."

Bruno did as he was ordered, but ground his teeth as he walked toward the door. When he returned again, his manner was as polite and attentive as before.

"Proceed," said he, "no one hears us; a mourner listens to you patiently."

"A mourner! We have greater cause to mourn than you have. We thought we had allied ourselves with one of the best families in the land." Bruno started as if angry.

"Pray drop your acting for the present," continued the Baroness, whose voice and appearance had changed. "We are alone now, and unmasked. In spite of the outward show of politeness, you have never treated me with the respect which I have a right to demand. Don't contradict me; please let me finish what I am about to say: When I calmly reflected on the matter, I was not angry with you on that account. I knew my position. But now, my dear son-in-law, matters have changed. I was what your sister was, but I never feigned virtue. The world esteemed me at my true value—"

Bruno heaved a deep sigh.

The Baroness continued, grinding her teeth with anger as she spoke:

"When your sister was so kind to us, I could have knelt to her in humility. She must give me back my humility, though she be in hell! It was not she who was the better; it was I— But now, my son-in-law, your disdainful behavior must cease. Let me tell you, you ought to feel glad that we've allied ourselves with you. But we shall never let you feel it; that is, if you conduct yourself in a becoming manner."

"And am I not doing so?" asked Bruno, who, during this attack, had entirely lost his self-command.

"We will see; but, first of all, let me tell you that, after this, I shall reside with Arabella as often and as long as I choose to. This insipidly moral queen has been taught a lesson, too. At present, however, I have no desire to

appear at court. But the social circle is open to me—I shall enter it, arm in arm with you, my amiable, my gallant son."

The old woman rose and, bowing gracefully, offered her arm to Bruno. The latter took his mother-in-law's hand in his own and held it to his lips.

"Fie! you've been drinking wine, in your grief!" cried the old danseuse, hurriedly putting her fine and strongly perfumed handkerchief to her lips.

"Miss Mother-in-law—" the words were on the end of Bruno's tongue; he would like to have hurled them at her. Steps were heard. A moment afterward the intendant entered, his presence serving as a great relief to Bruno.

"I beg pardon! don't let me disturb you," said he, when he saw Bruno's mother-in-law.

"You're not disturbing us," replied Bruno quickly. "In spite of a violent attack of fever, our dear mother, now our grandmother, has hastened to console us. I am fortunate in still having a few faithful relatives, and a friend like yourself. I shall now live entirely for the family still left me."

The Baroness nodded a pleased assent. She was thoroughly satisfied with Bruno's first rehearsal of his new rôle.

"We shan't leave to-day?" inquired the intendant.

"Yes, yes. We must not lose another minute."

The mother-in-law undertook to tell Arabella of Bruno's departure, and to inform her that he had been sent away on public business.

While slowly drawing on his black gloves, Bruno thanked his mother-in-law. He thanked her sincerely, for while he well knew that he was about to enter upon a state of dependence, and that her presence in his house would prove distasteful to him in many ways, he, at the same time, consoled himself with the hope that she would prove a companion to his wife, and that he could thus absent himself from home more frequently, and for longer periods, than he had before done; for he felt it not a little irksome to be obliged to spend so much of his time with his wife. The leave-taking was short, but hearty. Bruno

was permitted to kiss his mother-in-law's cheek. After he got into the carriage, he rubbed his lips till they were almost sore, in order to wipe the rouge off of them.

It was already evening when they drove off, and they passed the night at the first posting-house. Bruno lay down on the bed to rest himself "for a little while," but he did not awake until late the following morning.

CHAPTER X.

THE queen, overcome with grief, lay sleeping in her apartment.

The court ladies were gathered together on the terrace under the weeping ash, and did not care to leave one another. It seemed as if a fear of ghosts oppressed them all. It was but a few days since Irma had been in their midst. She had been sitting in the chair without a back—she never leaned against anything. The seat she had occupied remained empty, and if the paths were not freshly raked every morning, her footprint would still be there. And now she had vanished from the world. Her light had been extinguished, and in so terrible a manner. Who could tell how long her ghost might haunt the palace and what mischief it might do. The world, at last, knew what had been going on.

The ladies were busily engaged at their embroidery. At other times, they would take turns in reading aloud; but to-day their book—it was a French novel, of course—remained untouched. They were intensely interested in the story, but no one ventured to propose that the reading should be gone on with, nor did sustained conversation seem possible. Now and then a voice was heard: "Dear Clotilde," "Dearest Hannah, can you lend me some violet, or some pale green?" "Oh, I tremble so, that I cannot thread my needle; have you a needle-threader?"

It was, fortunately, at hand. They were, none of them, willing to appear so little moved as to be able to thread a needle.

They deplored Irma's fate, and it did them good to be

able to show how kind and merciful they were. They felt happy in being able to accord their pious forgiveness to the unhappy one, and, since they had been so gentle and forgiving, they felt it their right to denounce her crime the more severely. It was thus they avenged themselves for the self-humiliation they had endured; for, while Irma was the prime favorite, they had paid greater homage to her than to the queen.

They never mentioned the royal couple except in terms of respect—with all their apparent confidence, they distrusted each other. They felt that there was trouble ahead, but that it was best for them to appear unconscious of it.

Countess Brinkenstein was the only one who had a good word to say for Irma.

"Her father was greatly to blame," said she; "it was he who instilled this belief in Irma."

"And yet he had her educated at the convent."

"But she inherited from him a contempt for all forms and traditions, and that was her misfortune. She had a lovely disposition, was richly endowed by nature, and her heart was free from the slightest trace of envy or ill-nature."

No one ventured to contradict Countess Brinkenstein. Perhaps, thought they, etiquette requires us to speak well of Irma and to forget her terrible deed.

"Who knows whether her brother would have married the Steigeneck, if he had known that he was to inherit everything!" softly whispered a delicate and languishing little lady to her neighbor, while she bent over her wool-basket.

The one whom she had addressed looked at her with a sad, yet grateful expression. She had once loved Count Bruno, and still loved him.

"I have a book of hers."

"And I have one of her drawings."

"And I have some of her music."

They shuddered at the thought of possessing articles which had once been hers, and determined that everything should be sent to her brother.

"I passed her rooms, early this morning," said Princess

Angelica's maid of honor—she always seemed as if half-frozen, and rubbed her hands and breathed on her fingertips while she spoke—"the windows were open. I saw the lonely parrot in his cage, and he kept calling out, 'God keep you, Irma.' It was dreadful."

They all shuddered, and yet they felt a secret satisfaction in dwelling on the subject. The pious court lady joined the circle, and mentioned that Doctor Sixtus had just taken leave of her, that he had started for the Highlands, that Fein, the notary, had accompanied him, that he had also taken Baum along, and that they meant to search for the body of Countess Irma.

"Will he bring her here, or to Wildenort castle?"

"How terrible, to be gaped at in death by common people!"

"Horrible! it makes me shudder."

"Pray let me have your vinaigrette."

A bottle of English smelling-salts was passed round the circle.

"And to have every bystander volunteer a funeral sermon!"

"How improper to take one's life in so public a manner!"

"If there were no horrid newspapers," whined the freezing court lady.

The conversation gradually assumed a more cheerful tone.

"Ah me!" exclaimed a pert and pretty court lady, "how we were all obliged to 'enthuse' about the beauties of nature and the genial traits of the lower orders during her life and reign. Now, I imagine one may at last venture to say that nature's a bore, and that the lower orders are horrid, without being regarded as a heretic."

In spite of the malice that flavored it, they found the remark both just and appropriate. In a little while they were all conversing and laughing, just as if nothing had happened.

A wanton boy has shot a sparrow. The rest of the flock are very sad, and pipe and prate about the matter for a while; but soon they hop about again, and chirrup as merrily as before.

To give truth its due, it is necessary to state that many of the ladies would have been glad to speak well of Irma, but they kept such feelings in the background. Of all things in the world they dreaded showing themselves sentimental.

It was not until Countess Brinkenstein again began to speak, that the rest of the company became more calm and dignified than they had been.

Countess Brinkenstein's demeanor seemed to say: "I am, unfortunately, the one who prophesied it all; and now that it has all come to pass as I said it would, I am not in the least proud of it." It was both her right and her duty to speak compassionately of Irma, and yet, at the same time, mildly to point a moral.

"Eccentricity. Ah, yes, eccentricity!" said she. "Poor Countess Wildenort! The publicity of her deed is, in itself, a serious offense; but do not let us, while thinking of her terrible fate, forget that she was undeniably possessed of many good traits. She was beautiful, anxious to please every one, and yet without a trace of coquetry. She possessed intellect and wit, but she never used them to slander others. A poor eccentric creature!"

This disposed of Irma, and the other court ladies had, at the same time, received a lesson.

The eyes of all were directed toward the valley.

"There goes the carriage!" they said. Doctor Sixtus saw the ladies and saluted them. The notary sat by his side, and Baum sat opposite. He was too tired to sit up on the box. "It is scarcely a year since we made this same journey together," said Sixtus to Baum.

Baum was not in a talkative mood; he was too tired. After great preparations, he had that day passed his examination, and could say to himself that he had not come off without honors. Although he was not accustomed to find himself inside of the carriage, he yet thought he might take it for granted that this would henceforth be his place. He was about to become a different, a more exalted personage. He had, indeed, become such already—all that was needed was the outward token. He would have been willing to remain a simple lackey. Per-

haps the king desired to have it so, lest he might betray himself. He was willing to let him have his own way, even in this. He and the king knew how they stood toward each other. He smiled to himself, and felt like a girl whose lover has declared his affection for her; the formal wooing can take place at any time.

When Doctor Sixtus helped himself to a cigar, Baum was at once ready with a light. That, however, was, for the present, his last act of service. Nature was not to be overcome, and Baum was impolite enough to fall asleep in the presence of the gentlemen. But he was so well schooled that, even while asleep, he sat upright and ready at any moment to obey their commands.

It was not until they halted that Baum awoke. The notary's searching questions greatly disturbed his comfort. What matters the death of a countess, thought he, if one can rise by means of it. He was greatly annoyed that his family—his mother, his brother and his sister—were mixed up in the affair; and hadn't Thomas said something about the death of Esther, or was it merely a dream? Events had succeeded each other so rapidly that they quite bewildered him.

Doctor Sixtus apologized to the notary for Baum's disconnected narrative.

Baum looked at him in amazement. Did he already know that Baum was about to be advanced, and did he mean to curry favor with him? He was cunning enough to think of such a thing.

Baum resolved, for the present, only to show the spot where he had found the hat and shoes, and to leave his mother and brother entirely out of the affair. At all events, he would not drag them into it, and suggested that they should take the forester with them. They found him at last, and then wended their way toward the assize town in which Doctor Kumpan lived.

Sixtus sent for the latter. He soon came to the inn, and the jolly fellow was lavish in his praise of Countess Irma. He thought it greatly to her credit that she had had courage to live and die as she chose. Besides that, Kumpan delighted in joking his friend, in regard to the great missions on which he had been employed, looking

up wet nurses and hunting corpses. He asked for the privilege of being permitted to dissect the countess.

Doctor Sixtus did not in the least relish the coarse humor of his former fellow-student. Doctor Kumpan told him of the great change that had taken place in Walpurga's circumstances, that she and the rest of her family had moved far away to the Highlands, near the frontier. He also told him several very funny stories at Hansei's expense, and especially about the wager for six measures of wine.

Sixtus informed his comrade that Walpurga was no longer a favorite at court, and that it would soon be proven that she had been the mediator. Although he spoke in an undertone, Baum heard every word. After Sixtus had made this disclosure to Kumpan, he felt sorry for what he had done, but it was just because they had so few subjects in common, that he had told him the very matters he desired to keep from him. All that remained was to make his friend promise not to mention a word of the affair, and Kumpan always was a man of his word.

After Kumpan had left, Baum went up to Sixtus again and told him that he thought it would be well to go to Walpurga, as she might know something of the affair; but Sixtus replied that the journey would be a useless one, and that Baum was to remain with him.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the following morning, Bruno would have liked to return. What was the use of it all? Was he to act the fable of the little brother and sister over again, and to be the little brother who had gone in search of his sister? And what would be the result? A dreadful, agitating sight—one which he could never banish from his memory. It would haunt him in his dreams—a bloated, disfigured corpse with open mouth.

Bruno cast an injured look upon the friend who congratulated him on having slept so well, and on having thus gained new strength for the trials the day might have in store for him. Bruno looked at the intendant

with feelings of anger and distrust. He felt almost certain that this man regarded the whole occurrence as a tragic drama, which would have to be mounted for the stage. It was evident to him that the intendant was using this as a study, of which he would avail himself in future scenic representations, and that he was observing his every gesture and feature, so that he might be able to instruct the actors under him; so that he might say: "Thus does one pose himself, and thus does one groan when he finds his sister's corpse— Am I to be this puppet's puppet? No, never!"

Bruno would have liked, best of all, to have journeyed back to his mother-in-law, even if he had to succumb to her. He could convert his humility into gallantry, and, at all events, would be spared these terrible sights. But here was his friend encouraging him to neglect nothing which fraternal duty demanded of him. Oh! these people of feeling are the most abominable of mortals, for they take everything so seriously. Do they really mean all they say? Who knows? Every one in the world is merely playing a part, after all.

He must go on, and he saw what was in store for him. This terrible friend with the strong sense of duty—and, after all, he was not his friend—this man, whom he had inflicted on himself, would force him to spend days, searching for horrors which he had no desire to find. They drove on, in an ill-humor.

The intendant, finding that Bruno would formally thank him for every little service, declared:

"I beg of you, don't thank me. I am only doing my duty to my friend and to myself. You know that I once loved your sister, and that she rejected my suit."

He was discreet enough to refrain from adding that he had afterward rejected her offer, and Bruno groaned inwardly at his cruel discretion.

The intendant found Bruno quiet and reserved. Concluding that this was the natural reaction from the excitement of the previous day, he, too, remained silent. Bruno often looked at the intendant, as if he were a jailer leading him to the place of punishment. They drove on rapidly. At the different post-houses, where

they stopped to change horses, the intendant would fluently converse with the postillions and the innkeepers in their native dialect. Several of them knew him.

To his great alarm, it suddenly occurred to Bruno that he had the saloon warbler with him. He was perfectly at home here, and would now have a chance to display the treasures of his dialect wardrobe, to pursue his studies, and revel in the pleasure which the rude dialect of the region afforded him.

His friend, for this was the only term by which he dared characterize him, was now in his element, and found it no easy matter to refrain from expressing his delight thereat.

At length they reached the last mountain and saw, from afar, the mirror-like surface of the lake, surrounded by gigantic mountains and sparkling in the golden sunshine.

"Do you see that maple tree, over there?" said the intendant, no longer able to contain himself, "there to the left, by the small rock—that is the point from which I sketched the painting that hangs in her majesty's music-room."

The friend had imagined that this remark might help to create a calmer mood in Bruno, so that the terrible idea of his sister's having sought her death below that very spot, might not at once obtrude itself.

Bruno looked at him with an impatient air. Every one thinks of himself, said an inner voice, and this coxcomb is now thinking of his daubs. He remained silent, however, for silence was more expressive of grief than words could be. He rubbed his eyes, for the dazzling reflection of the sun's rays on the surface of the lake had made them ache. His friend grasped his hand and silently pressed it. He had understood this fraternal heart, and his glance meant: others may think you superficial and frivolous, but I know you better.

From the landing near by, they could hear the neighing of Bruno's horses, which were there in charge of his grooms. And now, for the first time, Bruno felt a sense of shame in the presence of his servants. They, of course, knew everything, and how they must have talked about

it in the tap-room. He was full of anger at the sister who had inflicted all this upon him.

The first information they received at the inn was that old Zenza had been there. She had endeavored to sell or to pawn the ring which the maid of honor had given her on the night before she had drowned herself. As they all regarded the ring as stolen, she could obtain nothing for it. It was now decided that Zenza must know more. They took a guide and walked along the mountain path that led toward her hut.

Bruno, being a huntsman, was usually a good climber, but to-day he felt as if he would break down at every step, and was often obliged to stop and rest.

His friend encouraged him, and they walked on through the sunny forest, where the light shone brightly on the soft moss, while many a hawk uttered its shrill cry overhead.

At the crossing of the roads, they encountered a party of ladies and gentlemen; they were in city dress and had adorned their hats with green branches and garlands. Bruno hurriedly stepped aside from the path. The intendant, however, was recognized by a former colleague of his, and Bruno heard him say that the guests of a little watering-place in the neighborhood were making an excursion to see the place where Countess Wildenort had drowned herself. The party passed on, and their loud and cheerful talk was heard from afar.

At last they reached the hut. It was closed. They knocked at the door. A growl was the only answer they received, and the next moment they heard some one dashing a bolt back.

A neglected looking, yet powerful man, with a wild, disheveled appearance, stood before them.

Thomas recognized Bruno at once, and exclaimed:

"Ah, Wildenort! it's well you've come. I take my hat off to you, for you're an out-and-out man. What matters one's father! When he's dying, ride off; one can't help him die, you know. Ho, ho! you're a splendid fellow. No one cares for the old lumber any more."

"What do you want of me?" asked Bruno, with trembling voice.

"I shan't harm you; there's my hand on it. I'll do

you no harm. You let the king do what he chooses and make no fuss about it, and so I shall do you no harm, for what you've done in the same line of business. You're my king. I got it out of her at the very last, that you were the one, and that, because it was you, she had helped your sister. You know what I mean, well enough. I shan't say a word. The stupid world needn't know what there is between us. Sister, king; poacher, count—it's all as it should be."

"This man seems crazed," said the intendant to the guide. "What do you want? Let go of the gentleman!" he called out to Thomas.

"Is that your lackey? Where's the one with the coal-black hair?—Let us alone," said Thomas, turning to the intendant, "we understand each other very well. Don't we, brother? You're a brother, and I'm one, too. Ha! the world's wisely arranged! You mustn't think I've been drinking; I've taken something, it's true, but that doesn't hurt me—I'm as sober as a judge. Now let me tell you what my plan is: I'll listen to reason, to anything that's fair and just; I can see that you're a decent fellow, for you come to me of your own accord."

"We wish to inquire whether you know anything of the lady in the blue riding-habit who was here?" said the intendant in the proper dialect.

"Ho, ho!" cried Thomas, "how finely he talks; but I can understand priest German, and judge's German, too. I've had enough to do with those people already. But you'd better not interfere"; and then, turning to Bruno, he added: "Let us two talk together, alone. Now listen, brother; this is what we'll do: You needn't make a count of me; all you need do is to give me servants and horses, and enough money and chamois and deer, and you'll soon see how clever and strong and hearty I am. Would you like to wrestle with me? or come out into the woods, and I'll show you that I can shoot better than you can. Now, all you need do is to give me either your sister's inheritance or my sister's, and you'll see we'll be a couple of merry brothers!"

Bruno hardly knew whether he was dreaming or awake. Some of the insolent fellow's words were clear enough to

him, others he could not understand. He motioned the intendant to withdraw, and then said in a gentle voice:

"Thomas, I know you now; sit down."

Thomas seated himself on the bench, and, raising the brandy jug which he had bought with the money received for the hat, said:

"Won't you drink something?"

Bruno declining, Thomas took a long draught.

The intendant said to Bruno, in French, that there was no information to be obtained from that quarter, and that he had secretly charged the guide to hold fast to the wild fellow, so that, unmolested, they might return to the valley.

"What sort of gibberish is the simpleton talking, there?" cried Thomas, preparing to rush at the intendant. At the same moment, the guide threw himself on Thomas, and held him fast, while the two gentlemen left the hut and hurried down the mountain.

It was not until the guide again came up with them, that they paused, and Bruno ventured to draw a long breath. The guide now told them how Thomas had raged, and how he had called out for the gun which he had hidden in the wood, and that he had said he must shoot his brother-in-law.

"The best thing the fellow could do," said the guide, "would be to drink himself to death, so as to save himself from being hanged."

After some time, Bruno ventured to ask the intendant, in a whisper, whether they had not proceeded far enough with their investigation, and whether it was not best to return at once.

The intendant was silent. Bruno looked at him again with that bitter expression which might also pass for grief.

The intendant, who saw that Bruno was almost broken down, consented to return.

CHAPTER XII.

THE two friends returned to the inn. On their way, they met one of the grooms who had brought their horses, and who now told them of a boatman who had informed him that the body of a woman had been dragged

from the lake. It had been near the village, of which a few scattered houses and the church steeple were visible on the opposite shore.

The intendant embraced Bruno, who seemed staggered at the news. They sat down for a while, in the very spot where they had been when the news reached them. The groom said that, by boat, they could reach the village in one hour; but that if they went by land, it would take them several hours.

"I can't cross the water," said Bruno, "I can't to-day; Schoning, don't ask it of me! Don't force me! Why do you torment me so?" he asked impatiently.

The intendant well knew that deep grief makes men unreasonable. In the dark depths of their hearts, there still lurks a feeling of anger, even toward those who most thoroughly sympathize with them, but who, themselves, have been spared by misfortune.

"I take no offense at anything you do," he replied, "and through you treat me rudely, I shall bear it. I understand you, and am far from wishing to induce you to cross the lake. We'll ride."

Their horses were brought, and they rode off in the direction of the village that had been pointed out to them. They passed an inn where a crowd of merry wagoners, boatmen and woodcutters were sitting under the lindens, and drinking beer or brandy. Bruno felt that he was being treated like a fever patient whom they were dragging over hill and dale, and to whose clouded vision the world seemed bare and desolate. When they reached the inn, his mouth watered. He thirsted for drink; perhaps it might give him new strength and, what was still better, might enable him to forget. But he did not venture to express his wish to his friend. Was it proper for one in his position to drink brandy? A poacher, like Thomas, might do so; but it would ill befit a cavalier. While thanking the intendant for the trouble he had given him, and promising that he would never forget it, Bruno, whose tongue was parched with thirst, secretly cursed the friend who would not allow him to drink. Ah, how fortunate it is that words are always at command. It is almost as fortunate as the fact that horses are properly

broken in, and keep up their pace so nicely that they give one no trouble.

The friends rode on at a rapid pace. It was high noon when they reached the village which Hansei and his family had left two days before. The landlord of the Chamois was standing at the door, and respectfully saluted the two horsemen with the groom behind them.

They alighted. Bruno handed the reins of his steaming horse to the groom. The intendant led his friend into the front garden, where they sat down. He then insisted on Bruno's taking a glass of wine. The host quickly brought a sealed bottle, and vaunted it as the best wine in the house. He also brought some roast meat and placed it on the table, and as long as he had brought it, it must be paid for, even though it were not touched.

The intendant took the host aside and, in a whisper, asked him whether it was true that the body of a woman had been cast ashore near there.

The host answered in the affirmative, and with a smile of satisfaction. The occurrence was a strange and unusual one, and it was only right that it should enure to his great profit. The intendant again asked him where the house was in which the body lay.

"I'll take you there," said the host, with a smile.

"Send for the burgomaster, also."

"There's no need of that; I'm a member of the council," said he, hurrying into the house and returning with his long coat and his medal. He meant to let the gentlemen see with whom they had to do. He felt sure that they must be people of quality, or else they wouldn't be traveling with a groom, and would have said: "Take your meat away; we shan't pay for it!" He even fancied that he knew one of them.

"Begging your pardon," said he to the intendant, "but some years ago, there was a painter here who looked enough like you to be your brother."

The intendant well knew that it was himself who was referred to, but he was not yet in the mood to renew the acquaintance.

The host accompanied the strangers to Hansei's house. On the way there, he said: "She was a handsome creat-

ure. She was beautiful, but good-for-nothing; and her belongings were as bad as she was: particularly her one brother."

The intendant beckoned the innkeeper to be quiet. Bruno bit his lips until they bled. They found it almost impossible to force their way through the crowd which had gathered in the garden and about the road. There were wailing woman, crying children, and cursing men.

"Make way there!" cried the host. He walked on, forcing a passage for the two men, and Bruno heard some one behind him say: "The handsome man, with the large mustache, is the king."

"No, he isn't; it's his cousin!" said another.

They had entered the garden. Bruno leaned against the cherry-tree, and the intendant motioned to the host to allow his comrade to rest for a little while. Everything seemed to swim before Bruno's eyes. Something touched him, and he started with fear. It was a dead leaf which had fallen from the tree above. At last, addressing Schoning in French, he said:

"What good will it do the dead, if I look at her? And it will harm me forever, for I shall never be able to banish the sight from my memory!"

"You must go in, my friend. Remember that these people have made every effort in their power to restore to life one who was a stranger to them, and they have done this out of pure philanthropy."

"Well, we can give them money for that; but why torment ourselves with these dead remains?"

But Bruno was, nevertheless, obliged to go in; leaning on his friend's arm, he entered the house.

Black Esther now lay in the very spot where Hansei had been two days ago, when thinking of her. Her thick, glossy black hair had fallen over her face; her mouth was open—the last cry that Irma had heard still rested there.

"Esther!" cried Bruno, covering his face with his hands.

"It isn't your sister!" said the intendant consolingly.

"Come, let us be off."

Bruno could not move from the spot.

"Yes! sister!" cried the old woman, who now rose up

from beside the corpse; "yes, sister. Didn't I tell you to let her alone, even if she did help the beautiful lady? didn't I tell you she'd kill herself, if you beat her again? And now you've had your own way, and here she is, lying in this house! Oh, this house, this house! The lake will wash it away yet. Lake! take the whole house! Who are you? What do you want?" she cried, springing up and seizing Bruno's arm. "Who are you with the black hands? let me see who you are—it's you, is it? you who didn't want to see your father die—and what do you want of my Esther? Great God!—now I see it all. You were the one, you! say you were!—say it—! Don't shut your eyes, or I'll scratch them out for all. It was you—I'll drive a nail into your brain, into the cursed brain that forgot her! Oh, why didn't I know it before! But there's time enough yet. My Thomas has already aimed at you—and he'll have a chance again—"

Bruno fainted. The intendant caught him in his arms, but could not support his weight and, therefore, laid him down on the same floor on which lay the dead body of Esther. The innkeeper hurried out to fetch water, and when they opened the door, several people entered from without, among them Doctor Sixtus, Doctor Kumpan, the notary, and Baum.

Sixtus soon restored Bruno to consciousness. A glance sufficed to inform Baum of what had happened. He supported himself against a door-post, holding fast with desperate grip, lest he should fall to the ground. At the first opportunity he glided out of the room. He was not needed there, and if he were now to betray himself, all might be lost. He dragged himself as far as the cherry-tree, sat down on the bench, buttoned his gaiters, unbuttoned them, took out his watch, counted the seconds, wound it up again, held it to his ear and carelessly played with the watch-chain. He stopped to consider. One great task still remains, thought he to himself, and that I must accomplish unaided. He felt that he had a clue to Irma's whereabouts. Sixtus wouldn't listen to such a thing and ridiculed him. So much the better; the credit would all fall to his share; and for that reason, this was no time to worry about his mother. His sister was dead,

and perhaps it was for the best. At any rate, he couldn't restore her to life; but, at some future day, he could, without discovering himself, provide for the old woman.

Baum felt proud of his firmness and stroked his chin with satisfaction.

Within the house, the excitement was not yet at an end. The old woman howled, shrieked, ran about the room, opened the window, and cried: "Strike him dead! Drown him, he drowned her!"

Baum let his watch drop from his hand when he heard these words. The old woman was dragged away from the window, and Doctor Kumpan held her fast. She went back to the corpse.

"Strike us all dead!" she cried, "there's no king on earth, and no God in Heaven!"

The old woman raved; then she would weep, and then would again go back to her child.

"Your lips are open! Say but a word! only one 'yes,' before these witnesses! speak his name! he ruined you and left you to perish in misery! They don't believe me. Say, you!" she exclaimed, addressing the intendant and seizing him at the same time, "say, didn't he utter her name and confess it all? Is nothing to be done to one who leads a poor creature into misery and drives her to death? Speak!" said she, turning to Bruno. "Here! take the ring your sister gave me! I want nothing from any of you!"

Shrieking and groaning, she again threw herself upon the corpse.

Bruno was at last led away. He was as pale as death; his face had been marked by his black gloves. They placed him upon the seat under the cherry-tree. Baum rose and brought some water, so that Bruno might wash his face. He was astonished when he saw the white handkerchief which had been blackened by the spots upon his face.

They went back to the inn. Like a fearful child, Bruno never relaxed his hold of the intendant's hand. At every sound he heard, he fancied that the old woman was coming to scratch out his eyes and to tear out his heart. At last he regained his composure, and asked the

intendant what he had said on seeing the corpse. Schon-
ing replied that he had called out "Schwester" (sister),
and that the old woman, who had understood him to say
Esther, had grown quite frantic in consequence.

Bruno felt comforted to learn that he had not betrayed
himself. He, nevertheless, set aside a considerable sum
for the life-long support of the old woman from whom
Irma had received her last shelter.

"Oh, my friend!" said he to the intendant, "as long as
I live, I shall never forget the image of that drowned girl!"

Bruno was so exhausted that he was unable to ride his
horse. Doctor Sixtus's carriage was in readiness and he
got into it, in order to accompany him back to the capi-
tal. The doctor gave Bruno the poor consolation that
Irma's body would not be recovered. That of the aban-
doned girl had floated on the surface. Irma, however—
as he had already said,—must have been kept down by her
long riding-habit, and would, therefore, never be found.

When taking leave of Bruno, the intendant said:

"Now I know how great a heart you have."

Bruno merely nodded in reply. He did not object. It
might be well if the intendant were to say the same thing
at court.

When they repaired to the carriage, the whole region
was obscured by a misty rain; neither mountain nor lake
were distinguishable. Just as they were starting, Bruno
called Baum to him and gave him his coat with a red col-
lar, for Baum was to mount Bruno's horse and ride it
home. The intendant rode back, accompanied by Baum.
He told the lackey to remain beside him, instead of fol-
lowing.

"These are fearful goings on," said Baum, addressing
the intendant.

"Yes, terrible. I think the mother of the drowned girl
must be crazed."

"Sir," resumed Baum, "there is something I should
like to speak to you about. I think that maybe the coun-
tess isn't drowned, after all. The court physician has
laughed at me, but I have a clue, and—"

The report of a gun was heard. Baum fell from his
horse.

"I've hit you this time!" cried a voice.

Thomas rushed forth from the thicket.

"Take me!" cried he, "I caught him after—"

At that moment, he saw Baum's body lying on the ground. In a furious voice, he cried:

"I meant to shoot Bruno, and now it's you! you!"

"Brother! my brother!" gasped Baum. "I'm Wolfgang! Your brother Jangerl—Wolfgang—Zenza—my mother!"

Thomas rushed back into the thicket and, in an instant, the report of another shot was heard.

The intendant was in despair. The rain fell in torrents. Baum gave one more convulsive start. Presently, a merry crowd passed by; it was the excursion party they had met early that morning. The ladies were horror-struck and hastened away; the gentlemen remained to assist the intendant. Peasants were called from the fields to carry Baum's body back to the village; others searched the thicket, and soon brought out the lifeless body of Thomas.

The intendant met the notary in the village, and gave him a full report of all that had happened. Before long, the whole village had gathered at the Chamois. It was no unimportant event, for three of one family to be dead at once. No one would confess to surprise that Baum had turned out to be Wolfgang. They all declared that they had recognized him long ago, even when he had come with Doctor Sixtus to take Walpurga away.

The intendant and the innkeeper sat up late that night. The former had discovered himself as the painter who had been a guest at the inn in times gone by. The host had much to tell about Hansei and Walpurga, and one can readily conceive the tone in which he spoke of them.

When they told Zenza what had happened, she listened with a stolid, stupefied air; nor did she seem to understand them when they told her that the count had left money for her and had promised always to take care of her. She burst into a shrill laugh, and when food was brought, greedily ate all that was placed before her.

Baum, Thomas, and Black Esther were buried in one grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE king was at the hunt. The queen was ill. Life at court went on as usual. The ladies and gentlemen dined at the marshal's table, and conversed upon different subjects. They were cheerful, for it was their duty to maintain the accustomed tone.

It was the fourth day after the receipt of the terrible news. It was after dinner, and the ladies were sitting under the so-called "mushroom," a round, vine-covered arbor, situated at the edge of the mountain vineyards. The roof rested, at the center, on a column and, in the distance, resembled an open umbrella, or a gigantic mushroom. They were delighted to have a chance to talk of the preparations for the betrothal of Princess Angelica. They spoke in praise of her noble traits, although she was merely a simple, modest good-hearted girl. They had the court catechism, the genealogical calendar, before them; for dispute had arisen as to the degree in which the mediatized Prince Arnold was related, on his grandmother's side, to the reigning house. Their conversation, however, was simply a makeshift.

Some one remarked that the intendant had returned from his journey. No one, however, knew what adventures he had passed through. They all knew that there had been deaths by shooting and drowning, but as to the "who" and the "how," they were as yet ignorant.

They felt quite happy when they saw the intendant coming in person. They welcomed him in a half-pitying, half-teasing tone. He seemed quite exhausted by his recent experiences. They offered him the most comfortable chair and, placing it in the center of the group, begged him to tell them everything. Although this general homage was not without a touch of irony, the intendant felt quite flattered by it, and was, as usual, ready to play the agreeable. He was always willing to sacrifice everything, not excepting himself, for the sake of being in favor.

He began by telling them of Bruno's deep grief: but that did not interest them. Very well—"as you don't

care to hear of Bruno, we'll pass him by." He then went on to give a cleverly arranged account of the terrible death of Baum, who, like a true servant, had been obliged to give up his life for another. However, the death had not been an undeserved one, for he had denied his mother and kindred, and, at last, fell by the hand of his own brother, who immediately afterward killed himself.

The intendant's audience were horror-struck, and found it wondrous strange that so much of the adventurous was concealed in a common-place, everyday lackey like Baum.

"You have at last beheld a tragedy in real life," said one of the ladies.

The intendant well knew that tragedies were no longer in favor, and, in his anxiety to please, recounted some very interesting reports about Walpurga, giving, as his authority, the host of the Chamois, an honest, upright man, who had been decorated for his services in the war.

Whether it was real or afflicted forgetfulness on their part, it is impossible to say,—but the ladies seemed to have forgotten that Walpurga had ever existed—but who can remember all one's subordinates?

For want of some other safe topic of conversation, they listened to various droll stories about Walpurga and her dolt of a husband. Schoning, to use his own words, simply repeated all that the veracious and upright host of the Chamois had told him. Hansei was described as an awkward bumpkin, unable to use his hands or feet, and obliged to call the schoolmaster to his assistance whenever he found it necessary to count the smallest sum of money. One of these stories, introducing a wager and a chamber window, was quite piquant and greatly to the taste of the ladies. They tittered, and scolded the intendant for talking of such things, but Schoning well knew that the more they scolded, the better they were pleased with what he had told them. He found an added pleasure in the opportunity afforded him of using the dialect of the mountain region from which he had but recently returned, and cleverly imitated the voices of the peasants and peasant women who had stood before the window, on the night referred to. He introduced various forcible and unequivocal expressions, and greatly enjoyed shocking

the ladies, who would, now and then, cry: "Oh, you horrid man! you terrible man!" One lady actually pricked him with her needle, but he quietly proceeded with his story, well knowing how delighted they were to listen to it.

And if there was no harm in describing Hansei as a dolt, there was just as little in heightening the colors in which Walpurga was depicted—the petticoats of the peasant women are always shorter upon the stage than they are in real life—and thus, with the kindest feeling toward all and merely yielding to his desire to please, the intendant said all sorts of strange things about Walpurga. It had been rumored, he added, that it was not without cause that the pastor had called her into the vestry-room on the first Sunday after her return.

With cautious reserve, he at last confided to him, as a great secret, the story that Walpurga had received immense sums of money from a certain lady who had been a friend of hers. It was, of course, impossible to assign a reason for such gifts, but it was well known that the money had been used to purchase a large farm. They had, indeed, been obliged to remove from their old home; for, even in the country, ill-gotten wealth disgraces its possessors. It had been the talk of the whole neighborhood. The bailiff had also confirmed the report that the whole purchase had been paid for in ready money, and that the price had been more than six times as much as Walpurga had received for her services as nurse.

The intendant again remarked that he did not mean to calumniate any one,—that really nothing was further from his intentions;—but he was determined to be interesting, even though it was at the expense of others, as well as himself.

They were delighted to know that this dressed-up specimen of rural innocence was at last exposed, and only hoped that the queen might also behold her favorite in her true colors.

Care was taken that she should not be left in ignorance of the story.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE king was hunting in the Highlands. He was a veritable sportsman, and, instead of allowing his retainers to beat up the game and drive it within shooting distance, would climb the dizziest heights while in quest of the chamois. His hardened and elastic frame enabled him to sustain any amount of fatigue or exposure, and gained sinewy strength and new ardor from the chase.

The gentlemen of the party felt sure that some important matter engaged the king's mind, and were not a little puzzled how to account for Bronnen's constant and almost exclusive attendance upon the king.

It was well known that Bronnen had declined to take charge of the war office under the Schnabelsdorf ministry, and now it was asserted that Schnabelsdorf was at a disadvantage; for he was only master of the green table and was unable to attend the hunt. Bronnen thus had the king's ear for several days.

Rifles were heard on the heights, and many a beast was killed; rifles were heard in the valley, and two brothers met their death. In the mean while, the capital was filled with murmurs that sounded like the roar of mighty ocean. The queen heard nothing of all this. In her apartments, all was quiet; not a footfall was heard, naught but occasional faint whisperings.

The queen had felt outraged by the manner in which the newspapers she had read, referred to Eberhard's death; and yet the article had been mild and reserved when compared with the utterances of the people.

They reported affairs at court as in a terrible state; it was even said that the queen had lost her reason when she heard the news of Countess Wildenort's death.

People little knew how much of truth lay in this rumor. The night that Irma had spent wandering over hill and dale, was not half so terrible as the thoughts that filled the queen's mind.

She hated and abhorred Irma, and yet envied her her death. A queen dare not commit suicide, for that were

without precedent. A queen must patiently submit, while they slowly kill her according to the forms of etiquette—must suffer herself, as it were, to be embalmed while yet alive. And, even then, they do not bury her. No—they simply deposit her in a vault; dignity must not be sacrificed, and, above all, there must be no queenly suicide. They offered to bring her child; but she refused to see it, for Irma had kissed it. She would rub her cheeks again and again; they were impure, they burned,—for Irma had kissed them.

Love, friendship, faith, fidelity, nature, painting, music, eloquence—all were dead to her, for Irma had possessed them all, and now all was a lie and a caricature.

The queen started from her seat with a shudder. She had been thinking of the king, and felt sure that his remorse must goad him to self-destruction. He could not support the thought that she whom he had ruined had still enough of courage and righteousness left to give up her life. How could he live after that? How could he aim his gun at an innocent beast, instead of at himself?

He whose name is on the lips of multitudes to whom he owes duties, may not lay hands upon himself. But what right had he to indulge in conduct which must drag him down from his exalted position? To whom could he look for truth, when he himself—

The queen's thoughts almost drove her mad.

People said that the queen was crazed—it seemed as if a vague feeling had informed them of the yawning abyss that opened before her.

She gave orders that no one should be admitted. She smiled at the thought that she could still command, and that there were still some left to obey her. After some time, she sent for Doctor Gunther. He appeared at once, for he had been waiting in the anteroom.

The queen found it a great relief to confide to him the thoughts that so bewildered and confused her, but she could not force herself to say that she still felt how the king loved her—that is, as far as his wavering, restless nature would permit the existence of what might be termed love. She confessed everything to Gunther, except that—she

felt ashamed that she could still associate the thought of love with that of the king.

"Ah, my friend!" said she at last, in a sad tone, "is there no chloroform for the soul, or for a part of it?—a few drops of Lethe? Teach me to forget things, to blunt my sensibility; my thoughts will kill me."

According to his usual practice, Gunther thought it best to produce an entire change of tone, instead of attempting to patch and mend the constitution at every fresh attack. He felt that, as soon as the queen had learned to think and feel differently, his path would be clear. Instead of offering to console her, he simply aided her in developing her thoughts, while he revealed to her the causes that underlie all human action. He treated the subject according to the great maxim of the solitary philosopher who claimed that all human actions are directed by the laws of nature. With those who have attained to a proper conception and understanding of these laws, the idea of forgiveness is out of the question. It may, indeed, be regarded as included in the admission of necessity.

It was thus that Gunther endeavored, as it were, to clear away the rubbish and the smoking ruins that were left after a fire. The fitful flames would, however, still burst forth, here and there.

The queen complained that all seemed chaos to her, and even went so far as to declare the desire to be virtuous as mere folly. The only comfort that Gunther offered her, was that he also knew the utter wretchedness of despair. He was not as one who, feeling himself secure from danger, calls out to him who wrestles with the agony of death: "Come to me: it is pleasant to be here." He was a companion of misery. He told her that there had been a period when he had not only despaired of his heart, and believed neither in cures nor in health, but had even lost all faith in the wisdom that rules the universe.

He acted on the principle that the only way to treat the despondent is to show them what others have suffered and yet have learned to live.

When the consciousness of this truth has dawned upon

the afflicted, there is new light, and he enters upon the first stage of deliverance.

"I will impart the saddest confession of my life to you," said Gunther.

"You?"

"There was a time when I envied the frivolous, and even the vicious, their light-heartedness. I desired to be like them. Why burden one's soul with moral considerations, when one may live so pleasantly while seizing the joys the world affords us?"

Gunther paused, and the queen looked up at him in astonishment. He continued calmly:

"I have saved myself, and my rich experience has convinced me that every one of us, even though he strive for excellence, has, so to say, a skeleton closet somewhere in his soul. There must have been a time, if only a moment, when his thoughts were impure, or when he was on the point of committing a sin."

As if reflecting on what he had said, the queen was silent for a long while, and at last said:

"Tell me; are there any happy beings in this world?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean, are there beings in whom inclination and destiny are in accord, and who are, at the same time, conscious of this harmony?"

"I thank you! I see that you are endeavoring to express yourself with precision. Your Majesty knows that, to a certain extent, I judge persons by their mode of forming sentences. It is not so important to display what is called cleverness, as to be clear and concise in what one has to say."

The queen observed that her friend endeavored to lead her to take a larger view of affairs, and to assist her in acquiring self-command; and, with a sad smile, she asked:

"And do you know the answer to my question?"

"I think I do; Your Majesty knows the story of the shirt of the happy one?"

"I do not quite remember it."

"Well, then, to tell it in as few words as possible: A certain king was ill, and it was said that he could not recover until the shirt of a happy man was procured for

him. They searched and searched, and at last found a man who was unspeakably happy, and—he had no shirt to his back. I change the story according to my own conviction. Were I a poet, I would, in fancy, wander from house to house, from town to town, from country to country, describe the life of men in various conditions, and point out that, with all their complaining, they were, nevertheless, happy, or, at all events, as happy as they could be. Every human being is endowed with a certain capacity for happiness, the measure of which is regulated by his nature. It is this which determines how high or how deep, his joys or misfortunes; how blunt or how keen, his sensibility. The measure of happiness assigned to every human being corresponds to the requirements of his nature. Unhappiness is necessary in order that we may appreciate happiness, just as we need shadows to help us distinguish the light."

"And so you think that all people are happy?"

"They are so in truth, but not in reality. The reason is, they are not in accord with the requirements of their nature, and are ever seeking for happiness in that which they have not, or rather that which they are not."

"I do not quite comprehend that, but will endeavor to do so," replied the queen; "but, tell me, can he who is conscious of guilt also be happy?"

"Yes, if he acts freely, and if the knowledge of his guilt makes him more forgiving and more active in good works. Errors, irregularities, or what are termed faults, are the result of excessive or defective endowment, and may, to a certain extent, be described as the *basso rilievo* or *alto rilievo* of character. Faults of excess may be remedied by education and knowledge, but not those of deficiency. Most of us, however, require those who belong to us, and all whom we wish to be noble and great, to fill up the defects of their nature; and that is simply requiring the impossible."

The queen was silent for some time. She was evidently making the doctor's thoughts her own.

"I, too, have a bas-relief fault," said she, at last. "My desire to forsake the religion of my fathers and to embrace

a strange faith subjected me to deceit and estrangement, and I regard this as a punishment visited upon me by God or nature. It was this that made the king look upon me as weak and vacillating, and impelled him to leave me. I was the first to think of defection, and defection at last became my punishment!"

The queen wept while uttering these words, and her tears were in pity for herself.

Gunther remained calm and quiet.

The queen was on the threshold of the second stage of knowledge.

"The mere idea of renouncing your faith—and Your Majesty may remember that I never approved of it—" said Gunther, after a long pause, "only served to show that Your Majesty felt the need of possessing convictions which were not alone in accord with your nature, but were also the outgrowth of it. Every clear perception of truth, every conquest over pain, is a transformation, a remodeling of existence, or, as it is sometimes termed, a purification."

"I understand," replied the queen. "Oh, that I knew the system by which the world is governed, and the reasons that underlie human destiny! Why was I obliged to experience this? Has it made me any better? Will it inspire me to nobler actions? Would I not have been far better if my life had remained unclouded? I was full of love for all human beings. Ah, it was so delightful to know of no one on earth who was my enemy, and still more delightful to know no one whom I must hate and detest! And what am I to-day? I feel as if, where'er I turn, a corpse lies in my path. There is no free spot left me on earth! You are a wise man; help me to banish these terrible thoughts!"

"I am not wise; and, if I were, I could not bestow my wisdom upon you. It was a saying of the ancients, that others can show you the apples of the Hesperides, but cannot gather them for you."

"Well, well! be it so. But tell me, would it not be better to grow greater and nobler and stronger in virtue, and in our faith in humanity?"

"Childlike innocence is happiness, but a clear percep-

tion of truth is a great gain and, according to my opinion, a necessary and enduring joy—"

"You avoid my question. It seems to me that you, too, are without the key."

"I do not possess it—life is inexorable. All that we can do is to bend to the descending storm, and yet remain steadfast. Sunshine will come again. We are subject to the lesser law of our own nature, and the greater law that embraces the universe. There is not a star that completes its course without deviation. Surrounding planets attract or repel it; but yet it moves on, in its appointed course, teaching mankind the lesson of perseverance."

"You offer remedies, and yet place your trust in the healing powers of nature?"

"Certainly," replied Gunther, "nature alone can help us."

After a while, he added:

"To one who is bowed down by grief, it were useless to suggest refreshing wanderings on the heights. With returning strength, the desire will return; for the will is merely the outward manifestation of inner power. Now, while bending to the blow which has just descended upon you, you are clothed and sustained by the life-giving power of nature. It is this that sustains existence until we again awaken to life and free action. My good mother, in her devout manner, used to say: 'May God help us, until we can help ourselves.'"

"I thank you!" said the queen. "I thank you," she repeated, and closed her eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the same morning on which the king and Bronnen were closeted together at the hunting-seat, the queen sent for Gunther. He found her clad in white and resting on her couch. She looked pale and feeble, and told him how provoked she felt at the vanity and conceit which had induced her, a young queen, to regard herself as wise and good, and had led her to imagine herself as gifted with unusual endowments.

"Did you know of what was going on here?" she asked the physician.

"No; I would not have believed it possible, and it is only now that I understand the terrible death of my dear friend Eberhard. A father in such grief—"

The queen did not enter into this view of the matter and went on, as if speaking to herself:

"When I recall the days, the hours, in which she sung, I must ask myself, can it be possible to sing such songs and such words,—breathing naught but love, kindness, exaltation, purity—and at the same time have nothing in one's soul? Aye, worse than nothing—falseness and hypocrisy? Every word seems false. Have we a right to be princes, to regard ourselves as superior to others and entitled to rule them, if we do not elevate ourselves above them by purity and greatness of soul? I have become a changed being since yesterday. My soul then lay at the bottom of the sea, and the waves of death and despair raged above me; but now I wish to live. Only tell me how to endure it all. You've been at court so long and despise everything. Don't shake your head; you despise it all—! Tell me, how is one to endure it? How can one manage to live on and yet remain here? You surely possess the mystery; impart it to me, for that alone can save me."

"Your Majesty," replied the physician, "you are still feverish and excited."

"Indeed, is that the sum of all your science? Princes are right when they abuse their fellow-creatures, for even the best of men are naught but polite shadows. I had placed all my dependence upon you; I had looked up to you as one exalted far above me; and where I had hoped to clasp a hand, you offer me an empty glove. You smile; I am not delirious, I've merely awakened to the truth; I have just passed through hours in which the beautiful world—ah! how full of beauty it was—seemed filled with naught but creeping worms and loathsome corruption. Oh, it is terrible! I fancied there was one free being to whom I could tell all, and from whom I could ask everything in return; but you are not the man. Ah! there are no real men in this world. The best are nothing more than title-bearing creatures!"

"You shall not have goaded me in vain!" muttered Gunther half aloud, and rising from his seat.

"I didn't mean to offend you!" cried the queen. "Ah, thus it is; in pain and sorrow, we wound those who are nearest to us!"

"Calm yourself, Your Majesty," replied Gunther, seating himself. "If there is anything for which I may claim credit, it is that I do not indulge my sensitiveness. I am severe toward others, because I am severe toward myself."

The queen closed her eyes, but presently she looked at him intently and said:

"I fear nothing more."

Thus encouraged, Gunther went on to say:

"Human fancy cannot realize how much of vice and misery, nor, on the other hand, how much of beauty, holiness, grandeur and sublimity there is in life."

"Your Majesty, I am here at the palace, which is a world in miniature, a world in itself. All that is terrible, and all that is noble, is attracted hither—and yet, with every returning spring, the flowers bloom and the trees deck themselves in robes of green, while the stars shine over all. There is a blooming flower, a shining star even in the most despicable of beings. A drop descends from the clouds and falls upon the dusty road. The drop and the dust uniting, become the mire of the highway; but to the eye that looks deeper, the drop is still pure, although divided and subdivided until it is almost impalpably minute, and inseparable from the dust that darkens it. But even this image does not suffice. No image directed to the senses, can convey an adequate conception of the Deity. God exists even in the grain of dust. To our eyes, it is dust; but to the eye of God, it is as pure as the water and is equally the abode of infinity. The very people whom you regard as so false would like to be good, if it did not entail so much trouble and involve so many sacrifices. Most men would like to win virtue, but do not care to earn it. They all desire to draw the great prize in the lottery of morality. 'Oh, if I were only good!' said a lost creature to me, one day. Your Majesty, truth tells us that hatred and contempt are not good, for they injure the soul. The true art of living requires

us to recognize that which is base in its true colors, but at the same time, to avoid debasing ourselves by violent or passionate feelings against that which is wicked or vulgar. You must remove hatred from your heart, and be at peace with yourself. Hatred destroys the soul. You must grow to feel that, viewed in the proper light, vice and crime are simply defects. They may lead to a thousand sad consequences, but, of themselves, have no existence; virtue alone is a reality. Come up higher, unto where I stand, and you will find that you have been tormenting yourself with mere shadows."

"I see the steps," said the queen; "help me up!"

"Naught can avail but self-help. Each must learn to be monarch of himself, even though he wear a kingly crown. The law teaches us that, in order to retain this command over ourselves, we must not permit anger and hatred to dwell in our souls, or to poison so much of the world as is given us to enjoy, be our share great or small."

"I had too much faith in virtue and kindness."

"Very likely. As long as one believes in mankind, there will be deception and despair. We persist in judging our fellow-creatures by what they are as regards us, instead of what they are as regards themselves. And thus, as long as we believe in human virtue, we may, at times, be perplexed at finding ourselves disappointed where we least expect it. As soon, however, as we recognize the Divine in everything, even though the possessor himself is unconscious of it, we have attained a lofty standpoint, from which we feel sure both of ourselves and of the world."

The queen hurriedly raised herself and, extending both hands to Gunther, exclaimed:

"You are a worker of miracles."

"No, I am not that. I am only a physician who has held many a hand hot with fever, or stiff in death, in his own. The healing art might serve as an illustration. We help all who need our help, and do not stop to ask who they are, whence they come, or whether, when restored to health, they persist in their evil courses. Our actions are incomplete, fragmentary; thought alone is

complete and all-embracing. Our deeds and ourselves are but fragments—the whole is God.”

“I think I grasp your meaning. But our life, as you say, is indeed a mere fraction of life as a whole, and how is each one to bear up under the portion of suffering that falls to his individual lot? Can one—I mean it in its best sense—always be outside of one’s-self?”

“I am well aware, Your Majesty, that passions and emotions cannot be regulated by ideas; for they grow in a different soil, or, to express myself correctly, move in entirely different spheres. It is but a few days since I closed the eyes of my old friend Eberhard. Even he never fully succeeded in subordinating his temperament to his philosophy; but, in his dying hour, he rose beyond the terrible grief that broke his heart—grief for his child. He summoned the thoughts of better hours to his aid—hours when his perception of the truth had been undimmed by sorrow or passion—and he died a noble, peaceful death. Your Majesty must still live and labor, elevating yourself and others, at one and the same time. Permit me to remind you of the moment when, seated under the weeping ash, your heart was filled with pity for the poor child that, from the time it enters into the world, is doubly helpless. Do you still remember how you refused to rob it of its mother? I appeal to the pure and genuine impulse of that moment. You were noble and forgiving then, because you had not yet suffered. You cast no stone at the fallen; you loved and, therefore, you forgave.”

“Oh God!” cried the queen, “and what has happened to me? The woman on whose bosom my child rested is the most abandoned of creatures. I loved her, just as if she belonged to another world—a world of innocence. And now I am satisfied that she was the go-between, and that her *naïveté* was a mere mask concealing an unparalleled hypocrite. I imagined that truth and purity still dwelt in the simple rustic world—but everything is perverted and corrupt. The world of simplicity is base; aye, far worse than that of corruption!”

“I am not arguing about individuals. I think you mistaken in regard to Walpurga; but, admitting that you are right, of this, at least, we can be sure: morality does

not depend upon so-called education or ignorance, belief or unbelief. The heart and mind which have regained purity and steadfastness alone possess true knowledge. Extend your view beyond details and take in the whole—that alone can comfort and reconcile you.”

“I see where you are, but I cannot get up there. I can’t always be looking through your telescope that shows naught but blue sky. I am too weak. I know what you mean; you say, in effect: ‘Rise above these few people, above this span of space known as a kingdom—compared with the universe, they are but as so many blades of grass, or a mere clod of earth.’ ”

Gunther nodded a pleased assent, but the queen, in a sad voice, added:

“Yes, but this space and these people constitute my world. Is purity merely imaginary? If it be not about us, where can it be found?”

“Within ourselves,” replied Gunther. “If it dwell within us, it is everywhere; if not, it is nowhere. He who asks for more, has not yet passed the threshold. His heart is not yet what it should be. True love for the things of this earth, and for God, the final cause of all, does not ask for love in return. We love the divine spark that dwells in creatures themselves unconscious of it: creatures who are wretched, debased and, as the church has it, unredeemed. My master taught me that the purest joys arise from this love of God or of eternally pure nature. I made this truth my own, and you can and ought to do likewise. This park is yours; but the birds that dwell in it, the air, the light, its beauty, are not yours alone, but are shared with you by all. So long as the world is ours, in the vulgar sense of the word, we may love it; but when we have made it our own, in a purer and better sense, no one can take it from us. The great thing is to be strong and to know that hatred is death, that love alone is life, and that the amount of love that we possess is the measure of the life and the divinity that dwells within us.”

Gunther rose and was about to withdraw. He feared lest excessive thought might over-agitate the queen, who, however, motioned him to remain. He sat down again.

"You cannot imagine—" said the queen, after a long pause, "but that is one of the cant phrases that we have learned by heart. I mean just the reverse of what I have said. You can imagine the change that your words have effected in me."

"I can conceive it."

"Let me ask a few more questions. I believe—nay, I am sure—that on the height you occupy, and toward which you would fain lead me, there dwells eternal peace. But it seems so cold and lonely up there. I am oppressed with a sense of fear, just as if I were in a balloon ascending into a rarer atmosphere, while more and more ballast was ever being thrown out. I don't know how to make my meaning clear to you. I don't understand how to keep up affectionate relations with those about me, and yet regard them from a distance, as it were—looking upon their deeds as the mere action and reaction of natural forces. It seems to me as if, at that height, every sound and every image must vanish into thin air."

"Certainly, Your Majesty. There is a realm of thought in which hearing and sight do not exist, where there is pure thought and nothing more."

"But are not the thoughts that there abound projected from the realm of death into that of life, and is that any better than monastic self-mortification?"

"It is just the contrary. They praise death, or, at all events, extol it, because, after it, life is to begin. I am not one of those who deny a future life. I only say, in the words of my master: 'Our knowledge is of life and not of death,' and where my knowledge ceases, my thoughts must cease. Our labors, our love, are all of this life. And because God is in this world and in all that exist in it, and only in those things, have we to liberate the divine essence, wherever it exists. The law of love should rule. What the law of nature is in regard to matter, the moral law is to man."

"I cannot reconcile myself to your dividing the divine power into millions of parts. When a stone is crushed, every fragment still remains a stone; but when a flower is torn to pieces, the parts are no longer flowers."

"Let us take your simile as an illustration, although in

truth no example is adequate. The world, the firmament, the creatures that live on the face of the earth, are not divided—they are one; thought regards them as a whole. Take, for instance, the flower. The idea of divinity which it suggests to us, and the fragrance which ascends from it, are yet part and parcel of the flower: attributes without which it is impossible for us to conceive of its existence. The works of all poets, all thinkers, all heroes, may be likened to streams of fragrance, wafted through time and space. It is in the flower that they live forever. Although the eternal spirit dwells in the cell of every tree or flower, and in every human heart, it is undivided and, in its unity, fills the world. He whose thoughts dwell in the infinite, regards the world as the mighty corolla from which the thought of God exhales."

For some time, the queen kept her face buried in her hands. Gunther quietly withdrew.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE king returned from the hunt. His courageous wanderings among the Highlands had reinvigorated him. He, too, was in a changed frame of mind.

He had already received a full account of what had happened at the lake. "That's over," thought he; "I can't always be dragging the past about with me."

He was informed that the queen had not left her apartments since the receipt of the dreadful news. He sent for Gunther, who informed him of the queen's condition, and recommended that she be treated with great indulgence.

The king fancied that the doctor's manner was more reserved than usual. He would have liked to ask him as to the queen's thoughts, how she had received the sad news, and whether she had conquered her grief; but it was Gunther's duty to tell him all this, without waiting to be questioned. At last, the king asked him:

"Is the queen's mind composed?"

"It is noble and beautiful as ever," replied Gunther.

"Has she been reading of late? Did she send for the court chaplain?"

"Not to my knowledge, Your Majesty."

The king, who, at other times, found the observance of etiquette so convenient, now found it irksome.

He would have liked the doctor to speak of his own accord, and explain much that was yet unclear, instead of simply answering the questions put to him.

"You have had a great trial; in Count Eberhard, you lost an old friend."

"He lives in my memory, just as he did before he died," replied Gunther.

The king's heart was filled with anger. He had been very friendly in his advances toward this man, had even inquired after an event in his private life, and yet Gunther, while preserving perfect decorum, remained as reserved and as repelling as ever.

His old aversion toward this man, who, in the midst of the excitement at court, always remained unmoved, was again aroused. He dismissed Gunther, with a gracious wave of his hand; but when he had gone, his eye followed him with a sinister expression.

A thought occurred to him which made his cheeks glow, and determined him upon another line of action. It was now clear to him that the real cause of his misstep lay in the fact that a third person had stood between him and his wife. This should no longer be the case, no matter how well it was meant. Instead of asking Gunther for information as to his wife's thoughts and feelings, she should tell him all, in person and alone. He felt a deep affection for her, and thought that, since he had conquered so much within himself, he was again worthy of her.

The king sent for Countess Brinkenstein. Since the sad occurrence, the king had only moved among men, by whom affairs of this nature are treated more lightly and, in fact, are scarcely alluded to. And now, for the first time, he stood face to face with a woman; one indeed in whom a noble mind was combined with the most orthodox observance of court etiquette. The king's demeanor was dignified, although his heart trembled with emotion.

"We have had sad experiences," said he to her.

With great tact, Countess Brinkenstein managed to turn the conversation into another channel and thus avert any explanation on the king's part. She thought it unbecoming a king to justify himself or to show himself weak or perplexed; and, besides that, she regarded it as the duty of those about him, to smooth over all that was unpleasant as gracefully as possible.

The king appreciated her considerateness. He asked her whether she had often seen the queen during the last few days, and who was now waiting on her. The countess informed him that she had only once been with the queen, who had expressed a wish in regard to his royal highness the crown prince.

"Ah, how is the prince?" asked the king. During all these days, he had scarcely thought of his child, and now, as if with renewed consciousness of the fact, he remembered that he had a son.

"Remarkably well," replied the countess, who went on to name the various ladies and gentlemen of the court who were now in attendance upon her majesty the queen. No one had seen her during the last few days, except Madame Leoni, who had been with her constantly, and the doctor, who had conversed with her for hours.

The king gave orders to have the prince brought into his apartments. He kissed the boy, whose round and delicate little hand played with his father's face.

"Thou shalt honor thy father—if I could only wipe away that one reproach," said he to himself.

He felt as if his child's touch had endowed him with new strength, and was about to proceed to the queen's apartments when Schnabelsdorf was announced. The king was obliged to remain and receive him.

The prime minister informed him that the result of all the elections was now known, and that his position would be a difficult one, for the majority had been on the side of the opposition.

The king shrugged his shoulders and said:

"We must await events."

Schnabelsdorf looked astounded at this indifference. What could have happened?

"There is only one new election necessary," said he. "Your Majesty is aware that Count Eberhard Wildenort was elected as a deputy?"

"I know," said the king. "Why mention this?"

Schnabelsdorf dropped his eyes and added: "I am informed that Colonel von Bronnen, Your Majesty's adjutant-general, whose name has already been mentioned in that connection, is to be brought forward as a candidate."

"Bronnen will refuse to stand," said the king.

Schnabelsdorf received this remark with an almost imperceptible bow. He had a presentiment of what was going on.

The king permitted his minister to inform him of what was most urgent, but begged him to be brief.

Schnabelsdorf was very brief.

The king dismissed him. His intention was to have Schnabelsdorf open the new chamber. If, as was to be expected, the majority were against him, Bronnen would form a new cabinet.

It was no slight struggle on the part of the king, to suffer that which ought to have emanated from his own will to appear as a yielding, on his part, to the popular voice; but he felt that it was the first real proof of his subjection to the law, and he meant to find his highest glory in giving expression to the voice of the people.

His new motto: "True and free," again impressed itself upon him. Calm and self-possessed, he repaired to the queen's apartments.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE queen had been informed of the king's return, and the calmness and self-command that she had regained seemed to vanish. As long as he remained at a distance, she felt herself secure in the lofty realm of thought; but now that he was near her, the thought of meeting him face to face made her tremble with fear. Her sense of injury loosened the weak foundations of the principles it had cost her such an effort to make her own.

It was already night when the queen heard her hus-

band's voice in the ante-chamber. He wished to see her, he said, even if she were asleep. He entered softly. She kept her eyes closed and forced herself to breathe as gently as possible. It was the first deceit of her life. She was only feigning sleep, and how often had he who now stood before her feigned sincerity and truth—? Her breathing became heavier; it required all her self-command to remain quiet. Horror at the idea of feigning death now possessed her.

She lay there motionless, with her hands folded, and her husband stood before her. She imagined that she felt his loving, affectionate glance, but what could his love or affection be? She felt his warm breath against her face. And now he felt her pulse, and yet she did not stir. She felt the kiss that he imprinted upon her hand, and yet she did not move. She heard him turn to Madame Leoni and say: "She sleeps quietly, thank God! don't tell her that I was here." She heard his words, and his soft footsteps while he left the room, and yet she did not move. Lest her attendant should discover the deception, she was obliged to keep up the appearance of being asleep and to affect entire ignorance of what had passed.

When the king reached the anteroom, he said to the waiting-woman:

"I thank you, dear Leoni!"

"Your Majesty," replied Madame Leoni, with a profound bow.

"You have of late afforded fresh proofs of your attachment to the queen. I shall not forget it. It is a comfort to me to know that she is surrounded by such careful attendants. My dear Leoni, do all you can to secure the queen as much repose as possible; and if she should wish for anything particular, which you think that the ladies of the court or Countess Brinkenstein need know nothing of, address yourself to me. Has the queen spoken much during the last few days?"

"Oh yes! unfortunately, too much; that's what makes her so exhausted. She talked for hours, incessantly."

"Was it with you that she talked so much?"

"Oh no!"

"Then it was with the doctor?"

"It was. But pardon me, Your Majesty, it seems to me that his medicines consist of words."

The king remembered that Madame Leoni owned a grudge to the queen, and a still greater one to Gunther, because the position of ayah to the crown prince had been given to Madame von Gerloff, instead of her. He was not disposed to take advantage of this, and only said:

"The physician, dear Leoni, should always be the confidant."

"Certainly, Your Majesty; but our noble queen is so despondent, and it seems to me it would be far better to cheer her up and make her laugh, instead of conversing about such difficult and terrible subjects. Your Majesty will surely not understand me, but I should like to help our noble queen, and her best, indeed her only helper, is Your Majesty. Whoever thrusts himself between you and her does more harm than good."

The king felt concerned. He had never indulged in espionage, and now that he felt himself purified and elevated, was doubly averse to it. Nevertheless, he asked:

"Pray, tell me what has happened!"

"Ah! Your Majesty; I'd rather die than wrong my royal mistress, but what I am doing can't harm her; it is only meant to aid her."

"Confide all to me," said the king, in a soft voice,—himself displeased at what he was saying,—"you could not so demean yourself as to be a spy on the words and actions of others, nor could I desire or permit you to do so; but it is necessary for me to know how the queen can be helped out of her present trouble, and, therefore, I ought to be informed of what is told her, and how matters are discussed here."

"Certainly, Your Majesty," replied Madame Leoni, and, having apologized for the ugly words, she informed him how the physician had spoken of the origin of the mud in the highways, how a pure drop from the heavenly clouds mingles with the dust of the road; and that they had gone on to talk of sculpture, of *haut relief* and *bas relief*.

Madame Leoni could only furnish a disconnected statement, but the king already knew enough.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON the following morning, the king sent word to the queen that he must see her.

He hastened to her.

They were both alone in the apartment.

The king was about to embrace his wife.

She begged him to be seated.

"As you please," said he, in a gentle voice. He was resolved to win her back to him, in candor and love.

"Will you speak first, or shall I?" he asked, after a pause.

His voice was clear and distinct, and startled her. She observed his fresh appearance, and grew still paler. She pressed her hand to her heart; she could not speak.

"Well, then let me speak. Mathilde, we won each other in sincere love. I frankly confess that I have sinned deeply against you and others, and now I beg you to believe in my sincere repentance. Don't judge me meanly, or in a narrow sense!"

"Not meanly? O yes, I understand! To great minds like yourself, morality is narrow-mindedness. Yours are the large, the world-embracing hearts, and I am a bigoted, self-opinionated creature!"

"Mathilde, don't say that; I didn't mean to wound you."

"Oh no! you didn't mean to wound me; certainly not, never!"

"Mathilde, with that tone we shall never arrive at perfect harmony. Ask anything of me, as a proof of my repentance and conversion. You have the right to do so; I swear to you—"

"Don't swear. I pity you,—there's nothing left by which you can swear. Swear by the head of your child—the child at whose cradle you exchanged adulterous words and glances with her!"

"Let the future efface all recollection of the past!"

"Very well. Issue a royal mandate: The world and, above all, my wife, are to forget that there ever was a Countess Irma; such is my royal will."

The king gazed at his wife in astonishment. Was this the same tender, sensitive being? What great change had come over her?

"Let the dead rest!" said he, at last.

"But the dead do not let us rest. She looks at me through your eyes, speaks to me with your lips, touches me with your hand; for your hand, your lips, your eyes, were hers."

"I will withdraw until you regain your composure."

"No, stay! I am quite composed. Perhaps you would rather not hear what I have to say?"

"I will listen to it all," said the king, seating himself; "proceed."

"Well, then let me tell you that you have desecrated a sanctuary, lovelier and more beautiful than any that ever existed on earth—the sanctuary in which you were worshiped. I may tell you this, for the temple is no more and you are no longer in it. I desired to be one with you in everything; in every breath, in every word, in every glance, even though it was directed to Him who is on high. It was for that, that I offered to sacrifice my faith—"

"Do you wish to balance accounts between us? Then remember that I didn't ask you to make that sacrifice; it would have been a burden. The idea of its being a sacrifice is out of the question."

"Very well; I'll say no more about that. I merely wished to tell you that what I regarded as a sacrifice, you looked upon as weakness. Enough of that, however. You were false to your marriage vow, and that, too, with her whom I regarded as my friend! I know the way of the world, in such matters. The Steigeneck whom your father—"

"Don't insult my father's memory! Say what you choose of me, but don't insult my father!"

"I don't insult him; I honor him. Compared with you, he was pure and virtuous. He was free, from all affectation of morality, from lying, deceit and treachery!"

"Who is it that speaks?" said the king, interrupting her. "Is this my wife? Is it a queen who utters these words?"

"They ought not to be my words; you have forced them upon me. But let us not dispute about words. Your father bestowed his affections on a stranger who lived at a distance, and who did not know his wife. Compared with your conduct, his was virtue itself. You were false to me, and that, too, with a friend who was constantly at my side; we conversed together of love, of the stars, of the trees, the mountains and the valleys, and our thoughts seemed as one. Side by side, we beheld the works of art, we sang, we played together—and yet you could both act thus, while at my side, and enter the inner sanctuary of that which is highest in life. The sky, the earth, all that was pure and noble in thought or word—you have destroyed them all. I would like to know the day when, by word or glance, you both ventured to begin your false game! With every kiss you gave her, you must have said: 'Ah, my wife—how unhappy I am—she's so narrow-minded, so devoid of grandeur—' Don't interrupt me! Of one thing I am sure: no husband or wife can ever touch the hand of another in love, without feeling: 'I am miserable.' It isn't hatred and revenge that now speak through me, it is justice! As long as I still loved you, I could hate you; but now I simply judge you. You must bear the consequences of your actions. Justice requires that. I pity and deplore your lot. How will you ever delight in the forest, when she whom you loaded with sin fled through the forest unto death? How can you look at the lake into which her sin plunged her? The whole world is annihilated to you, you poor creature! How your pen must tremble when you again sign a death sentence—you've murdered both the dead and the living! You may write 'pardon,' but who will pardon you, 'king by the grace of God'?"

"Mathilde, I once believed you incapable of even alluding to that which is unseemly."

"Did you believe it? and what would you call unseemly in your case?"

"Speak on, speak on!" said the king, as the queen now paused and heaved a sigh. He saw the fire consuming all that was dearest to him on earth, and, at the same time, recognized the beauty of the flame. There are

strange chords in the human soul, and the king, although filled with shame and indignation, could not but admire the power revealed by his wife. He had never dreamed of its existence. She was greater and stronger than he had ever imagined, and his appeal to her seemed to acknowledge her supremacy. This made her the more indignant and, with forced composure, she continued:

"No one has a right to demand of another, of a prince, or even of yourself, that he should be a genius; but every one has a right to ask that you should be an upright man, a true husband and father. You could be that, just as easily as any peasant or day-laborer can."

Pain and resentment were depicted in the king's countenance.

"Mathilde," said he, at last, in a tremulous voice, "Mathilde, I am not speaking of myself; but consider how these words must injure you."

"I've considered all that. I know that the thousand little pleasures of life are no longer mine. I shall bear a burden which death alone can remove! I know that. But I've no pity for myself. Where love is dead, justice must reign!"

"Love? The love that could die was not love!"

"Don't let us dispute. We've ceased to understand one another. Listen to my last, my irrevocable words. What is left me? to despise you, or to become despicable myself. Here I stand," said she, drawing herself up, and appearing taller than before, while a dark flush overspread her countenance, "here I stand and tell you that I despise you. I will live with you and by your side, as long as life remains; but I despise you! Know that, and now leave me. I shall appear with you this evening, at the court festival. You shall have no reason to complain of any breach of decorum. Once, love for you was all my life—that memory is mine; you need it not!"

The king arose. He wanted to speak, but it was long before he could utter a word.

"Does any one know of your sentiments toward me?" he asked, at last, in a hoarse voice.

"No; we owe it to our son that no one should know of it."

"Mathilde, I never would have believed that you could speak thus to me. But it does not come from you; another has forced himself between us. He taught you to think and speak thus!"

"You are the great master who has taught me to substitute hatred for love, and contempt for adoration."

"Does your friend, the doctor, know nothing of what you are now inflicting upon me?"

"I cannot swear to you—you can no longer believe an oath—but this I can say: if Gunther knew that I had suffered myself to be carried away by the ardor of my past love for you, it would grieve him deeply, for anger, hatred, and revenge, are foreign to his great nature!"

"His great nature may be made very small."

"You will not, you dare not, rob me of my only friend! I implore you! I'll ask for nothing more as long as I live. I'll be obedient and submissive. I can no longer offer you love. Grant me but this one request: leave me my only friend!"

"Your only friend? I don't know that title. As far as I know, there is no such position at court."

"On my knees, I implore you! Don't mortify him! let me keep this one friend. He's great, pure, noble; it is he alone who reconciles me to life!"

The queen was about to throw herself on her knees before the king. He touched her—she shuddered and drew herself up.

"Be proud!" exclaimed the king. "Be so! and bear the consequences! Be the exalted one, the pure drop from the heavenly cloud mingling with me, the dust of the highway—"

The queen looked up amazed. What was it she had heard? The words of her noble friend thus repeated and distorted. Her head swam.

"Be what you will!" continued the king. "Be alone, and seek support in yourself!"

He pulled at the betrothal ring on his finger. It was difficult to get it off, and his face grew red while he pulled at it with all his strength. At last, he drew it over his knuckle. Without saying a word, he laid the ring on the table before the queen.

He walked to the door. He stopped for a moment, as if listening for a word from her—a word to which he would have replied from the depths of his heart, a word which would have saved and reconciled them both.

The queen looked after him. Would he not turn again? would he not once more, with heart-piercing tone, cry: "Forgive me!" The love that still dwelt in her impelled her toward him. It was but for a moment that the king paused. Involuntarily, the queen stretched her arms toward him—the moment had passed and, with it, the king had left.

The queen walked to the *portière*, and stared fixedly at it. Then she fell back on the sofa and wept. She lay there weeping for a long while.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE queen was now doubly unhappy. She felt unutterable grief because of her lost love, and had, moreover, suffered herself to be led away by wicked and hateful passion. The sense of freedom and of elevation, which Gunther had awakened in her, had vanished. And now that the heart-rending separation had taken place, it seemed to her like a death that had been foreseen. But, although we behold its approach from afar, death ever brings new and unlooked-for woe in its train.

The queen went to the crown prince's apartments. On her way, she passed by the king's cabinet. She paused for a moment, and asked herself how it would be if she were to enter here, clasp him in her arms and say: "Let all be forgotten; you are unhappy as well as I, and I will help you to bear your lot."

She passed on, for she felt afraid lest she might again appear to him as weak and wavering, while she meant to be strong.

When she saw her child, her eyes regained a bright expression. The child had not seen its mother weeping and wrestling with her sorrow, and now she was with him again. "He, too, will come here," said an inner voice that she was almost loth to listen to. She trembled

when she learned that the king had had the prince brought to his apartments that very day.

She waited for a long while. She would kiss the boy's little hand again and again, and would look around to see if the father were not coming.

He came not.

The king was sitting in his cabinet, his hands pressed against his burning brow. He had passed the turning-point in his career, and he could no longer permit himself to be oppressed by private, personal griefs. He had repented, and that was sufficient. He was determined to effect a change in himself, and that was more than enough. Of what use were further accusations and penalties? A deep feeling of resentment against his wife arose within him. She was weak and revengeful. No, not weak; she was endowed with a power of which he had never had the faintest presentiment, and he felt deeply conscious of the grievous fault he had committed in deceiving such a wife. He was, however, unable to free himself from the thought that his punishment was an affront to his exalted position. And while his own life-fabric lay in ruins, why should he, with wondrous self-denial, set about righting the lives of others? The heart that is reconciled and at peace with itself, is the only one that can exert a reconciling and peaceful influence on others. A spirit of defiance and discontent moved him to abandon the reforms he had begun, for she who was nearest and dearest to him, his own wife, would not justly acknowledge them.

He sat there for a long while, dull and depressed. At length he arose, his face expressive of defiance and firmness. He had determined to accomplish the good, whether his efforts were appreciated or misjudged. His strength for good had conquered. Unaided, and for the sake of his own honor, he had determined to carry out the measures that he considered right, and the happiness that this would cause him must compensate for the lost pleasures of love.

There were great festivities at court that evening.

The betrothal of Princess Angelica to Prince Arnold was officially celebrated. The queen appeared, leaning on

her husband's arm, and had a kind and gentle greeting for every one. She looked weak, but none the less beautiful.

No one was able to discover the faintest trace of the rupture between the royal pair, nor did any one notice that the ring was no longer on the king's hand.

The king and queen conversed with apparent cordiality, but she often looked as if she must ask him: "Has nothing happened?"

Then she would look about her fearfully, as if the specter of Irma must suddenly appear in white, dripping garments.

When the king, accompanied by the queen, had made the round of the saloons, he saluted Bronnen most cordially and remained with him for some time, engaged in lively conversation.

The queen looked on in amazement. She well knew that Bronnen had secretly admired Irma, and had even sought her hand. How had it happened that the king had become so intimate with this man, and distinguished him above all the other members of the court? There was no opportunity to obtain information on this point. The whole summer palace was illuminated; the terrace was hung with variegated lamps; vessels of burning pitch were placed in the park, sending their brightness out into the autumn night; the band of Prince Arnold's regiment played merry airs, the glow of lights and the sounds of music were wafted far out into the valley and even into the mountains, on whose lonely heights there were human dwellings.

The queen met Gunther, but simply exchanged a few hasty words with him. The king greeted him politely as he passed by.

He won't be so cruel, thought the queen. There was a strange shyness in her expression whenever her eyes rested on Gunther, and, on one occasion, the king observed this and shook his head. The queen felt that Gunther must be displeased with her, for she had not acted according to the laws that he had explained to her.

On the following day, it was reported throughout the capital that Doctor Gunther had received his dismissal,

The official gazette which contained an account of the betrothal festivities announced that "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to accept the resignation of his body physician, Privy Councilor Gunther, and, in token of his satisfaction, has conferred the cross of Commander of the **** Order upon him."

Among the personal announcements was the following:

"I bid farewell to all my friends, and am about to remove to my native town **** in the Highlands.

DOCTOR WILLIAM GUNTHER,

*"Privy Councilor and late Physician in Ordinary
to His Majesty the King."*

A STORY
OF
A SOLITARY WORLDLING.

BOOK VII.

(IRMA'S JOURNAL.)

CAST ashore—what is there left me, but to live on, because I am not dead?

For days and nights, this unsolved question kept me, as it were, hovering between heaven and earth, just as it was in the terrible moment when I glided down from the rock.

I have solved the problem.

I am working. I shall remain resolved, no matter what the result. I find it a relief to note down my thoughts and feelings.

I was ill,—of a fever, they tell me,—and now I am at work.

I had told the grandmother of what I could do, but there was no chance to apply it here. She took me out into the garden, and we gathered up the apples that Uncle Peter shook down from the tree. Then the old, blind pensioner, whose room is over mine, came out and told us, with angry cries, that a certain portion of the apples belonged to him. He tried to find one, so that he might taste it, and thus ascertain which tree we were shaking. I handed him an apple, and told him that I lived in the room under his.

We were still in the garden, when a man came who wanted to purchase two maple-trees that were standing by the cross road, in order to use them for carving. This seemed like a ray of hope. I told the grandmother that I knew how to mold in clay, and that I thought I could easily learn how to carve in wood. And now I'm in the workshop, as a pupil.

This is my first free Sunday, and, while all are away at church, I am writing this.

*

I once knew a man who had already been kneeling on the sand-heap, the muskets aimed at him, and—he was pardoned. I have often seen him. Oh that I had asked him how he lived on!

*

There is no mirror in my room. I have determined never to see myself again.

And since I neither have, nor desire a mirror, let these pages be the mirror of my soul.

*

Oh this repose! this solitude! It is like rising from the lake, like life regained. And yet how calm, how restful!

Up here, and in thousands of other places on this earth, 'twas ever thus, while, down below, I was about to commit a fearful sin!

*

I have just returned from the workshop. Formerly, when making excursions from the summer palace into the surrounding country, we would stop at the industrial villages and visit the large workshops, where everything was shown us. I used to feel a sense of shame—ah! that was long ago—at the thought of our merely looking on for a moment, while others were working. And when we returned to our carriages and drove off, leaving the men still at their work, what must they have thought of us?

I am now at the workbench myself.

*

Why does no religion place the command: "Thou shalt work" above all others?

*

They say that the wound sucked by living lips heals quickly. O thou who art called queen! I would like to suck up the blood that trickles from thy heart!

*

Did I destroy the letter to the queen, or did it reach her?

*

I started with fright, when the grandmother asked me why I had pained the queen by informing her that I meant to take my life.

Why? I know not why. All I know is that I could not help it; it was the last, the unavoidable tribute I owed to truthfulness.

Why is it that we only concern ourselves about what others may think of us after death when life has become but an empty sound?

*

Sad and painful days.

I regarded it as my duty to write to the queen from my place of concealment. Uncle Peter, a true-hearted and obliging little man, who is always at my service and would like to show me a kindness every moment, offered to carry a letter for me to a distant town. The queen shall not grieve on my account—not for my death, at all events. I will let her know that I am yet alive, but that my life is one of expiation. If I only felt sure that I had really burnt the letters, or that they reached him and her. Him I need tell no more. The good mother noticed that something was troubling me—something that I had kept from her. She often came to me, but asked no questions. At last I could bear it no longer, and told her what I had determined on. She took me by the hand—whenever she means to make her words additionally impressive, she does this, as if she felt that she must hold fast to me physically—and said: “Child, you’ve only to make up your mind clearly as to what you mean to do. Ask your own heart whether you wouldn’t rather be discovered. Ask your conscience.”

I started. It is true, I should not care to do anything, but if it were to happen—

“Don’t give me your answer,” continued the mother; “answer yourself, and then ask yourself whether, if you returned to where you once were, you wouldn’t, on the morrow or the day after, wish to be away again. But let me tell you one thing: whatever you determine on, do it thoroughly. Don’t write at all, and let the queen mourn you; for it’s much easier to grieve for the dead than for one who, though living, is lost; or else, write to her hon-

estly and frankly: 'Here I am.' As I said before, whatever you do, let it be done thoroughly. O my child!" she added, "I fear it will be with you as it was with the poor soul. Do you know the story of the poor soul?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell it to you. There was once a young girl who, having gone astray and died an early death, descended into hell; and there Saint Peter could always hear her crying, from amidst the flames, 'Paul! Paul!' in tones that were so heartrending that even the most wicked demons couldn't find it in their hearts to mock at her. So one day Saint Peter went up to the gates of hell and inquired: 'My dear child, why are you always crying "Paul! Paul!" in such a pitiful voice?' and the girl replied: 'Ah, dear Saint Peter, what are all of hell's torments? To me, they're nothing. Paul is worse off than I am. How will he endure life without me? I only ask for one thing; let me return to the earth once more; only for a moment, so that I may see how he's getting on, and I'll be willing to remain in hell a hundred years longer.'"

"'A hundred years!' said St. Peter. 'Consider, my child; a hundred years is a long time.'

"'Not to me. Oh, I implore you to let me see my Paul once more! After that, I'll certainly be quiet and submit patiently to everything.'

"'Saint Peter resisted for a long while, but the poor soul gave him no peace, and at last he said: 'Well, you may go, for all I care; but you'll be sorry for it.'

"'And so the poor soul returned to the earth, in order to see her beloved Paul. And when she got there, and saw him feasting and enjoying himself with others, she quietly went back to eternity and, shaking her head sadly, said: 'Now I'll return to hell and repent.' And then Saint Peter said to her: 'The hundred years you promised are forgiven you. During the one minute you passed on earth, you suffered more than you would have done in a hundred years of hell.'

"'And that's the story of the poor soul.'"

*

I thirst for some spring outside of me, which would re-

fresh and redeem me. I long for music, for faith, for some soul-liberating dedication of myself! I find it not. I must seek the spring within myself.

*

In deepest grief it often seems to me as if it were not I who have suffered thus. I go my way, and it seems as if some one were telling me the story of what had happened to another.

*

For the first time in my life, I know what it is to feel that I am being borne with and favored. I really ought not to be here. I am eating the bread of charity. Now I know how the poor homeless ones must feel. If Hansei cared to do so, he could send me out of his house this very day, and what would become of me then?

*

I am obliged to eat in the company of my hospitable friends, and I find it no easy matter to do so. I pity Hansei, most of all. To him, it must seem as if a strange apparition—the phantom of one whom he knows not, was seated at his table. I destroy his happiness.

*

I have punctured my hand with the gimlet, just because, while at work, I am busy thinking of other things. My little pitchman has brought me a healing salve.

*

Antique forms of beauty cannot be worked in wood. It is inflexible, stubborn stuff, and can, with difficulty, be made to yield to the designs of art. It is naught but a makeshift material.

*

“Oh, how glorious it must be to live up here!” How often is this expression heard during country excursions! But we forget that the atmosphere of country parties and that of home are two very different things. How different when the wind whistles over the stubble fields and rages among the leafless forest trees; when dull and heavy mists creep over the mountains; when, for days and days, the clouds hang upon the heights, and, now and then, suffer a summit to appear in phantom-like outline, only to hide it again; when, at night, the storms disturb your

sleep, and it seems as if day would never come. Yes, ye picnic spirits, with garlands of fresh leaves on your hats! spend weeks up here without a sofa, without fresh bread; only think of it—without a sofa!

*

Solitude with happy, cheerful memories, must needs be peaceful and placid. It suggests the lonely tree that sends its roots through the rich soil and into the clear stream in the valley. But solitude with sad and dark memories reminds me of the tree whose roots, ever striking against rocks, must pass over and clamber around them. Thus, holding a rock in their embrace, they are like a heart laden with a heavy burden that it can never rid itself of.

*

Perfect solitude is when, for a whole day, no human eye has beheld your face. It does one good to know that no human eye has seen you, and that the glass that mirrors your features is, as yet, unsullied by the breath of another.

*

Solitude is apt to make one superstitious. One naturally casts about him for some external support.

It always alarms me when, on beginning work in the morning, one of my tools drops from my hand. I feel that the day which begins thus will prove a sad and troubled one. I fight down this superstitious feeling.

*

He who possesses a firm faith, although in solitude, is not alone.

*

My master is always out of humor. His wife and three daughters assist him at his work. Hansei has advanced the pay for my lessons. I am an apt pupil.

I notice that these people regard me as slightly demented. The little pitchman informed me that Hansei had given out this report, intending that it should serve as a sort of invisible cap. This gives me liberty and yet protects me, but at times it makes me feel uneasy.

My master also thinks that I am out of my mind. He addresses me cautiously, and is delighted when he finds that I have understood him.

*

The swallows are departing. Ah! I cannot deny that I fear the approaching winter. If I only do not become ill. That were terrible! It would force me to betray myself or—no, I dare not be ill. But I am still so nervous. It is hard for me to mention it, but it is hard to bear it. A cow in the stable near by has a bell on her neck, and day and night it keeps up its unrhythmic tinkling. But I must get used to it.

*

I really dread the winter. If it were only spring time, instead of autumn. Nature would be my friend. Nature is the same everywhere. But now winter faces me. I must reconcile myself to it, however, for we cannot arrange the seasons to suit ourselves. I will learn which is the stronger, my temperament or my will. I shall impose no thoughts upon my mind but those which ought to engage it.

I have determined upon this.

*

The shoemaker means to recognize Cinderella by her foot—he finds mine unusually small for that of a peasant girl.

I trust that the fairy tale may remain a fairy tale.

That touching air from Isouard's Cinderella:

Good child, thou must contented be,
A better lot's in store for thee,

has been haunting me, all day long.

How simple the words! Music is the fairy that invests Cinderella's accents with royal robes, and enthrones them on the lips of all mankind.

*

O happy nursery tale! Thou askest not how the princess lived as poultry-maid. Thy fancy uttered its creative: "Let there be—" and behold! it was.

But, in life, such transformations are not brought about without great effort.

Walpurga has rightly divined my feelings. It was but to-day that she said:

"You can't get used to things here. Life here must seem almost as strange to you as it did to me in the pal-

ace, but, of course, it's easier to get used to a silken bed than to a sack of leaves."

I felt like saying: "And if one means to go home again, it's far easier to put up with such discomfort," but I repressed it. One ought not to torment such people with logical consequences. Their thoughts and feelings are like the singing of birds, without rhythm and, at best, like the folk-songs, whose melodies close on the third, instead of on the key-note.

*

Since the alluring, glittering life of the great world could at any time have been mine, I find it easy to forego it.

Had I entered a convent and were living there, fettered by a vow and subject to restraint, I know that I should have mourned away my days behind the bars.

*

To be without gloves! I never knew that one's hands could become so cold. I cannot realize that I am without gloves. When he drew off my glove, a shudder passed through me.—Was it a presentiment?

*

In the mornings I feel the want of a thousand little conveniences, with which use had so familiarized me that I scarcely knew I possessed them. I am obliged to learn the affairs of everyday life from the good mother. It is just these things that we forget to learn. We are taught dancing, before we are really able to walk.

From cleaning our shoes in the morning to putting out the lamps at night, how many are our wants, how many the helping hands we need! What with cooking, washing, scouring, drawing of water, and carrying wood, man finds no time to think of himself. Nature furnishes clothing and food to the beasts; but man must spin and cook for himself.

I have imposed a difficult task upon myself, for I have determined to allow no one to wait upon me. An anchorite cannot afford to be too cleanly or fastidious; but then I was not intended for an anchorite.

*

At first it oppressed me to think that I had become a Robinson Crusoe in spirit, but now I am proud of it.

He who is thrown upon himself, and is no longer able to live in accordance with custom, is cast away on a desert island, and must create everything anew for himself.

But why should I, whose heart was already borne down with its burdens, be obliged to suffer shipwreck, too?

*

When I look out into the night and all is dark, and there is no light to tell me: "Here are other beings like yourself," I feel oppressed with fear, as if I were alone upon the earth!

*

(October.)—This evening—ah! the evenings are already long—it suddenly occurred to me: There are thousands who lead a life of affluence and pleasure, who move in society, and yet—

Why should I alone renounce the world, deprive myself of its pleasures, and bury myself in solitude?

Because I must and shall! I live only by the favor and charity of others. I have wasted my life, trifled it away. Shall I try to regain it in bitter earnest? I once trifled with words, but now they fetter and judge me!

*

"You're still too heavily laden?" said the grandmother.

"How so?"

"If a wagon's loaded too heavily, you can't grease its wheels so as to stop their creaking. You must wait till it's empty. Then you can raise it with a jack-screw, take off the wheels and grease the axles. The burden you still bear is the thoughts of the past; lay them aside, and you'll soon feel relieved."

*

At last I know why I get up in the mornings. Something seems to say to me: "Thou shalt labor. To-day, this will be finished; to-morrow, that." And when I lie down to rest, there is always something more in the world than there was at daybreak.

*

"Work!" "Work!" is the daily, hourly watchword here. They think of nothing but work. It is a necessity of their being, just as growth is to the tree. It is this that makes them so self-reliant.

*

There is misery and discord, even here.

In the kindness of her heart, Walpurga said that she could not endure the thought of the old blind pensioner's being obliged to eat his meals alone, and that she meant to have him at the table with the rest.

"I won't have it!" said Hansei. "Not a word more about it; I won't have it."

"Why not?"

"Why? You ought to know that yourself. If Jochem has once been at the table, you can never get rid of him again. So we'd better not have him at all. You don't know how an old blind man eats."

After that, not a word was spoken during the meal. Walpurga made believe that she was eating, but she was merely choking down her tears, and left the table soon afterward. She is keenly sensitive to such rudeness and cruelty; but she never complains, not even to me.

*

(During a violent storm.)

What a fright I have had to-day! My little pitchman told me that a man had hanged himself somewhere in the vicinity.

"It had to come," thought he. "The man had hanged himself fifteen years ago, but they cut him down, and he lived on. But it was just as if he always had a rope around his neck—people who've once tried anything of that sort, never die a natural death."

How his words startled me.

Can it be that such dread fate is yet in store for me?

I answer: No! It shall not be!

*

To sit in my warm room and look out at the driving snowstorm, is like going back in thought to the hurly-burly of the great world.

Nine weeks have passed already.

I still have a dull, heavy feeling, as if I had been struck in the head with a hammer. I merely exist, but it seems as if life were again dawning upon me. When I awake in the mornings, I am obliged to ask myself who and where I am, and to recall all my woe. But then work soon summons me away.

*

I have nothing more to look for, be it from the outer world, or the morrow. I am forced back upon myself and the present. For me, there are neither letters nor books, and the very roads are closed. To arise in the morning and know that no tidings, whether of joy or sadness, can come from without; to have nothing to fall back upon but one's self and the undying laws of nature: he who can lead such a life, self-contained and yet contented, must be like the child illuminated by its own radiance—the child painted by Correggio.

Hammer and axe, file and saw, all that once seemed to me instruments of torture for poor enslaved humanity, I have found the instruments of deliverance. They banish the demons that dwell within us. Where these tools are wielded by industrious hands, evil spirits cannot tarry. The redeemer who will consecrate labor, is yet to come.

*

At last, I find myself obliged to be content without doing anything in the way of art.

Although wood is useful, and in many respects indispensable, it cannot be applied to serve beauty apart from usefulness. The substance with which my art, or rather trade, employs itself, is unequal to the demands of art, except for decorative purposes. Bronze and marble speak a universal language, but a wooden image always retains a provincial character. It addresses us in dialect, as it were, and never attains to the perfect expression of the ideal. We can make wooden effigies of animals or plants with which we are familiar, and can even carve angels in *relievo*, but to make a life-size bust, or human figure, of wood, were entirely out of the question.

Wood carving is only the beginning of art, and is faltering, or, at best, monotonous, in its expression.

What has once existed as an organism cannot be transformed into a new organic structure. Stone and bronze, however, do not acquire organic shape, except at the hands of man.

If a Greek of the days of Pericles were to behold our images of the saints, how he would shudder at our barbarism.

*

This journal is a comfort to me. I can express myself in my own language and feel perfectly at home. I cannot, at times, avoid regarding my constant use of the dialect of this region as a sort of affectation. Everything that I say appears to me distorted. I feel as if wearing a strange costume, and as if my soul were concealed behind an iron mask. Although I am a child of the mountains, the words I utter seem strange and foreign. A dialect proves poverty of resources. It is an imperfect instrument; a kettle-drum, for instance, on which one can play neither concertos nor fantasias. Or, to put it differently, the language of Lessing and Goethe is like the beautiful butterfly that has left the chrysalis to which it can never more return.

Alas! The one terrible thought confronts me at every turn. I have offended and denied you, ye who represent the spirit of my people and of humanity. You fostered me, and I have abused the gifts which education bestowed upon me. I must remain in exile.

*

The fire that still smolders within me must be extinguished.

My heart is so heavy that it seems to drag me down, as if weights were hanging to me.

*

I am so weary, so exhausted, that I feel as though my limbs must break under me! I should like to do nothing but sleep; to sleep always.

*

I should like to perform a pilgrimage to some place or person, as an act of expiation.

I now understand the basis of a religion of symbols—a religion that speaks to the eye.

I will go hence—to Italy, to Spain, to Paris, to the East, to America. I will go to Rome and become an artist. I must be one. If I am still to live on in the wide world, I must enjoy it fully and deny myself nothing, for I am not of a self-sacrificing temperament. I could hurl the full cup of life into the abyss, but to see it before my eyes, and yet languish and mortify myself—that I cannot do. I will, I must go. Something calls me hence. Naples lies

before me. I see a villa on the shore; merry excursions by water; a crowd of laughing, singing, gayly attired creatures—I plunge into the current of life. Better there than in that of death. And yet—I cannot—

*

A gloomy, terrible, twilight hour. Something urges me to turn back, and tells me that the whole world is mine. What has happened? Are there not thousands like me, who live honored, oblivious of themselves? What is it within me that whispers: "You must expiate?" I can go hence. It will seem as if nothing had occurred. "A piquant adventure," "a disappearance for a few weeks."—What more can they say? All I need is to be bold—the carriage rolls along, all salute me. I am beautiful, and no one will see the writing on my brow, for a diadem sparkles there.

But the terrible words are written there—it seems as if I could behold my own soul face to face.

*

There is a childhood of the soul and, with all her experience, the grandmother possesses it. Oh, that I could gain that childlike feeling! But have not those who seek it, forever lost it?

*

Old Jochem often brings his money to me, and makes me count it for him, piece by piece. He maintains that one is so often cheated in money matters.

My little pitchman told me that the peasants almost always treat their aged parents who have given up their property to them, with great unkindness, and then he asked me: "Why must Jochem live so long? He has nothing in the world but hatred and mistrust." I know no answer.

Old Jochem is a veritable peasant Lear, but as he is able to complain at the court of justice, and has actually done so, his case is not pure tragedy.

But there is no court of justice at which a king can complain; nor does he desire one; and hence his fate is great and tragic.

My friend, call me when thou standest in judgment upon thyself. I am the only one who dare accuse thee,

and yet I accuse not thee, but myself. And I am expiating my guilt.

*

The open hearth-fire affords me many happy moments. How beautiful a fire is! What are all jewels, compared with it? Poor old Jochem cannot see the fire. It is the most beautiful thing in every house— Men should be fire-worshipers.

"You've had good thoughts," said Hansei to me, when I was sitting by the open window to-day. "I could tell it by your looks."

He evidently longed to put a question to me, but he is determined to keep his resolution. He never asks me anything and, to avoid doing so often changes the form of his sentences. I told him my thoughts, and his manner seemed to imply: "It isn't worth while to think of such things."

"Yes," said Hansei at last, "that's true enough. When one sits by the fire, his thoughts will roam."

To Hansei's notion, nothing in the world is so objectionable as taking a walk. He cannot conceive why one should roam about, where there is nothing to seek and nothing to do, and why, under such circumstances, one would not rather lie down on the long bench and go to sleep.

*

When I think of good Kent, I always imagine him as having a rich, full voice, like that of Bronnen, whom, in his youth, he must have resembled.

Certain figures pass in procession before my mind's eye. The queen and Bronnen are the only ones ever present; the king vanished with the forgotten past. In my dreams, many visit me, but he never comes. Why, I know not. I cannot solve the enigma.

To one who, when alone, stops to think, many things lose in value, human beings among the rest. Personally, Gunther was no more to me than another would have been. Emma was a mere echo.

If we thus reckon over our possessions, we find them little enough, and I have left but little behind me in the world.

*

The ringing of the sleigh bells is the only sound one hears. The woods are full of busy workmen. Snow and ice, which block the roads elsewhere, here serve as highways.

*

Labor, by sending its fruits out into the world, places our vital force at the disposal of others. The work which I have fashioned goes out among men, and yet I am left undisturbed in my solitude and concealment.

Man's work leaves him. It seems to me that I once met with the same idea in Ottilia's journal.

*

The dog is the friend and confidant of solitary man. Lonely, deserted spots, like this, aid one to appreciate his faithfulness, for he fails not to give notice of every unwonted occurrence.

*

I often rush to the window when the dog barks—who knows what stranger may have come?

Suppose the intendant or Gunther were suddenly to come, and ask me to follow them back into the world?

The very thought makes me tremble.

Would I be obliged to obey?

*

To know that I had, at one time, renounced the world, and that it was but a step and a leap—makes it easier to bear with life. I am now beyond misfortune's reach.

And yet—if life were to claim me again—

*

I am but an ant dragging a pine-needle.

*

I am not quite forsaken. I bear, within me, memories of melodies and pictures, and, above all, songs of our great master, Goethe.

“On every height there lies repose.”

This passage has occurred to me hundreds of times, refreshing me just as if it were a gentle, cooling dew, falling upon a parched field. I delight in the harmonious cadence and in the simple words!

I could not rest until I had repeated the song to some

one. I recited it to the old pensioner; he understood it, and my little pitchman has already gotten it by heart. How fortunate is the poet! One short hour of his life becomes undying to thousands after him. How I delight in these precious memories! I am like the old pensioner, who has learnt a few songs and quietly sings them to himself.

*

I am beginning to feel something like veneration for the old pensioner.

Early this morning, he came to me, dressed in his Sunday clothes, and wearing the medal which he received in the war of liberation. It was not without a certain air of pride that he said: "They're reading a mass for me at church to-day. I served under Napoleon in those days, just as the king did, too. It was in the year 'nine' and, on this very day, up to three o'clock—that is, some time between three and four—I was sound and hearty, when, all at once, I was struck by a ball, here in the third rib—that's why I wear my medal on the right side. I fell to the earth, thinking: Good-night, world! God keep thee, my dear sweetheart! She who was afterward my wife, was my sweetheart at that time. They extracted the ball with a crossbill, and I kept on smoking while they were at work. My pipe never went out once, and I was soon all right again. But one doesn't easily forget such a day, and so I arranged it, at the church, that they should read a mass for me on this day. See, this is the ball and, when they bury me, I want them to lay it on my third rib."

He showed me the ball. He carried it in a leather purse. After that a child that he had hired for the purpose led him down into the village.

I will now be more patient with the unfortunate old man. His life was a drop in the ocean of history—struck by the enemy's bullet—! A leaden ball can be extracted, why cannot also—

When I reflect on the daily events of the life I now lead, all my thoughts seem to lose themselves in the one unsolvable problem.

The grandmother told me a strange truth to-day. I

had been telling her that, even in the past, I had never been perfectly happy, when she replied:

"You've deceived yourself. It's always so in the world. Those who are deceived, have deceived themselves, but they're never willing honestly to confess it."

*

Uncle Peter is the very embodiment of cheerful poverty. He is always in a good humor, and I have been the means of making him quite happy. He brings my work, carries away what I have finished, and, between us, we have quite a handsome profit. He also assists me in preparing the wood, and he handles saw and axe as deftly as a bird does its claws and beak.

*

To-day I received the first money that I ever earned by the work of my hands. Uncle Peter counted it out to me on the table. He refuses paper money. Nothing but silver will satisfy him. "Ready money smiles," said he, with a laugh in which I could not help joining. How small are these gains, and yet how encouraging. I have earned them. All my life long, I have merely enjoyed what others have offered me. It was a privilege, inherited from my ancestors, that others should labor for me.

I can now manage to pay Walpurga something for my support. She refused to receive pay, but I shall insist upon it.

*

It is well that my employment is, to a great extent, a mechanical one, comprising much which is necessary and requires neither reflection nor contrivance. Certain things must be done, and there is but one way of doing them. If I were obliged to do anything that required great mental exertion, it would be the death of me.

*

It is now four months since I came here.

My hands have become hardened.

The treatment I receive from those about me, satisfies me that their affection for me is sincere.

*

If one could only always remain the same—that is, in the full possession of one's powers.

I often give way to fits of depression and feel completely undone, forsaken, weak and helpless, and as if help must come from somewhere. But whence? and from who?

I am obliged, with each succeeding day, to overcome the melancholy that oppresses me during the mornings. In the evenings, I am calm—for I am weary then.

*

We hear the falling rain, but not the snow. Bitter grief is violent; resignation, calm and silent.

*

It is bitter cold up here; but the woods are near us, and my monster of a tile stove is a faithful friend who preserves his warmth.

*

Literally speaking, when Hansei returns from the forest it often takes him an hour to thaw, and regain control of his voice and movements. Until then, it is best not to talk with him, for he is easily offended; but when he has thawed, he is quite happy again, and always says: "I thank God that I've been a woodsman!"

He is evidently thinking of some method of improving the forests, but he does not say what it is.

The lower orders always have overheated rooms. They enjoy intoxication, even that of heat.

*

I have no mirror. There is no need of my knowing how I look. A mirror is the beginning and the cause of self-consciousness. A beast does not see itself,—it is only seen by others—and yet, whether it be the bird on yonder bough, or the cat that sits before my window, it adorns itself. I, too, dress myself carefully, and for my own sake, and am ill at ease when my clothes are loose and ill-fitting.

*

When I first came here, I found it quite difficult to associate with those about me, but now I find comfort and self-forgetfulness in my intercourse with them. I should not like to darken their existence, but to brighten it, instead. They feel that while I partake, I also contribute my share.

I think the idea is Goethe's.

*

There was great joy in the house to-day, owing to the unexpected visit of Walpurga's friend and companion Stasi, with her husband, a forester. What happiness, what joy, and what an interchange of experiences!

Hansei at once invited the forester to be sponsor to his boy, for boy it must be. Walpurga quickly said that she would like to show her friend through the house, and I was obliged to go with her.

Among the higher classes, love may be greater, may possess more energy, more depth, and more of all that is allied to passion; but the lower orders seem to possess greater faithfulness and constancy. Work teaches us to be faithful.

*

I have been out in the forest with Hansei. Oh how beautiful! We passed a frozen waterfall; the crystal columns sparkled in the sunshine. Hansei pointed out two trees that were far up the mountain. He means to have them felled for me, so that I may have the best wood for my work. Am I expected to work up two whole trees?

Hansei was quite amused, when I told him I had not forgotten his rule of the mountain: "Go right on and never stop."

Mountain-climbing in winter has made me very tired, but I feel quite well.

*

I have often wondered why I never heard any mention of Hansei's family. The little pitchman has just told me that his mother died an early death, and that he never knew his father.

This accounts for much in Hansei's behavior, and only renders it the more beautiful.

*

We are feasting on meat broth.

Great is Hansei, the dispenser of good!

Yes, he is great. How all our illusions vanish! An Homeric hero who cuts up swine and cooks and roasts them, remains a hero for all, and Hansei is as good as any of them, although it be not with the sword.

There is Homeric feasting throughout the farm. They all bite with teeth as good as those of Menelaus.

*

The greatest blessings are pure blood, steeled sinews and strong nerves.

But he who, besides these, possesses a quiet conscience, is the happiest of creatures.

*

I love the twilight—day fading into night. He who lives in communion with nature is the only one whose life does full justice to each day.

Man is the only being who lives far into the night. Light and fire makes us what we are.

Schnabelsdorf the omniscient, once said: "The hour at which men retire is the measure of their civilization."

At court, they are just sitting down to dinner. They are joking and laughing, and telling each other anecdotes. If I were suddenly to appear among them?

No, I shall not disturb ye!

In a little while, they will be driving to the theater. Isn't to-day—? I had almost forgotten it—yes, this is my birthday. It was to-day a year ago that I went to the ball, in the character of the Lady of the Lake, and it was there he said to me—it was in the palmhouse—I can still hear his soft voice: "I have purposely chosen this day. You alone are to know it. You and I."

Oh! that night!

I wonder if they are thinking of me there?

The Egyptians, at all their festivals, displayed mementoes of their dead. I cannot write any more—I will light the candle—I must work.

*

There is a deaf mute who lives down in the village and works at coarse wood carvings. He has neither learned to read nor to write, nor has he ever had any religious instruction. He knows nothing at all; but he does know the church festivals, the holidays, and Shrove Tuesday especially. On those days he will plant himself, with his umbrella, in front of the church, and watch the peasants as they go by. If he sees one who pleases him, he walks up to him, takes off his coat and sits down at the table,

and, without saying a word, they give him food and drink for three days.

And thus he happened to come to our house. Sometimes he cries, and cannot tell why, but he endeavors to express himself by dumb motions. The little pitchman declares that he cries because he can't eat any more.

I have tried to make myself intelligible to him, but we do not understand each other.

*

(Ash Wednesday.)—To-day, every one in the house is silent and thoughtful. Every brow was strewn with ashes, while they repeated: "Mortal! remember that thou art dust."

Ah! mine is a long Ash Wednesday, after a mad carnival!

In my mind's eye, I often behold the picture of the Egyptian princess. Her garments have fallen from her nude form and, with loosened hair, she kneels in prayer by her open grave.

When wilt thou receive me, all-merciful mother earth?

I am reminded of the grandeur of Antigone's answer to Creon, who has just announced to her the sentence of death:

"I knew that I should die; thou only tellest me when."

*

I shall quietly bear the consequences of my actions, relying on myself, looking for no aid, either material or spiritual, from without.

*

When the people have finished repeating the Ave Maria during the tolling of the vesper bell, they say "Good-evening" to each other. It is a beautiful custom, and deems to say that they have returned from heaven unto those whom they love on earth.

*

When there is no one by, Walpurga always addresses me as "Countess," and treats me with the deference she deems me entitled to.

Everything seems reversed. At one time, I used to address *him* familiarly in private, and in public—

Ah! that one memory forever thrusts itself in my way!

If I were to become sensitive, it would be the most terrible thing that could happen to me. Perhaps I am so, already. The sensitive being is as one unarmed among those who are fully armed, as one unveiled where all the rest are masked.

I will, I must be strong!

*

Walpurga brought me some flower-pots to-day, with rosemary, geranium and oleander.

Hansei had brought them from the place of a great doctor who, he says, lives at some distance from here, in the valley. His gardener is allowed to sell plants, and Walpurga brought them to me, saying: "You've always had flowers about you, and these will last through the winter."

These few plants make me happy. The flower does not ask what sort of a pot it is in, so long as it gets its share of sunshine and rain. What enjoyment do those who dwell in the palace have, of the hot-house flowers? They neither planted nor tended them: they are strangers to each other.

*

Hansei came to me to-day and said:

"Irmgard, if I've ever wronged you—though I don't know that I have—I beg you to forgive me!"

"What makes you ask me that question?"

"Because to-morrow we go to confession and communion."

The tears that fall upon these pages are my confession, a confession that I cannot frame in words.

*

Why was I obliged to cross the threshold of evil before entering this circumscribed and yet peaceful existence? Why not pure and free, proud and strong?

I have somewhere read that Francis of Assisi, returning, early in the morning, with the merry fellows who had been his comrades in the drinking bout of the night before, was suddenly seized by the Holy Spirit and, renouncing the world, led a holy life ever afterward.

And must it always be through paths of sin?

But far sadder is the question: Why were you, O queen! obliged to suffer thus?

*

I often wander about the fields in the pouring rain, and feeling like a prisoner. What keeps me here? what lures me hence?

*

I lead the life of a prisoner, confined by walls and iron gratings formed by my own will.

I endure all the pain of exile!

I live in a state of torpor. Why must I wait for death?

It often seems to me as if I were lying at the edge of a precipice, and yet cannot awake and rise.

Whither should I go?

*

The thought sometimes flashes across the desert waste that fills my soul, and drags me along, like a powerless rider mounted on some enchanted steed: "You know nothing of the world you have left behind you: those who are about you conceal what knowledge they may possess, and you dare not ask."

How would it be if the queen were dead, and he who once loved you and whom you loved in return—ah, so deeply!—were doubly alone and forsaken, and grieving because of thee? Let him have but the faintest token that you are still alive, and he will come for you, and, mounted on a white palfrey, you shall again enter the palace as queen. All will be expiated, all will be forgiven. You will be a friend to the people. You know them, for you have lived and suffered with them— This thought often seizes me and envelops me, as it were, in an enchanted net. I cannot rid myself of it, and I seem to hear voices and trumpet tones, calling me hence. I have not yet quieted the wild brood that dwells in my soul.

*

Mysterious demons slumber within our souls. At the faintest call, they raise their heads and crawl from their hiding-place. They have cunning eyes and can readily change their shapes. They can appear as virtues, and, borrowing priestly robes, can speak the language of sympathy: "Have pity on yourself and others." They make a show of their power and love of action, and say: "You can bestow happiness on one and on many.

You can do great and good service to one and to the multitude."

I annihilated them. I held the light up to their eyes, and they vanished.

Thou livest, queen! Friend whom I have so deeply injured, thou livest! I do not ask, nor do I wish to know, whether thou art dead.

Thou livest, and my only wish is that thou mightst know of the life of repentance that I am now leading, and how little compassion I have for myself.

*

The Greek drama, "Prometheus Bound," occurs to me. Prometheus was the first anchorite. He was fettered from without; we fetter ourselves by vows or the rules of an order.

I am neither a Prometheus, nor a nun.

*

There is but one thing, which the outer world might afford me, that I still long for, and that is the music of a large orchestra. Fortunately, I often hear it in my dreams. How strange! While sleeping, my soul plays on all instruments, and performs great orchestral works which I never entirely succeeded in committing to memory.

We lead a dual life after all.

*

Freedom and labor are the noblest prerogatives of man. Solitude and industry constitute my all in all.

*

Walpurga has never referred to the warning she once gave me. With a rude hand, she snatched me from the edge of the precipice and, in return, I scolded and deceived her, while deceiving myself. She represses everything that might remind me of that scene.

*

To-day, Jochem confided to me the one grief that clouds his life: "They lead old oxen and cows to the slaughter-house," said he; "old horses and old dogs they shoot, and old men they feed to death—that's all the difference."

*

The dwelling-house on our farm has been neglected and is sadly in need of repair; but Hansei is not inclined to begin building at once.

"We must make shift with the old house," he says, "the work must be done first." And, besides this, he has a certain dread of what people may say. The house had been good enough for those who had been there before him—why shouldn't it be good enough for him?

Even the farmer, on his lonely estate, is not perfectly independent. He who cares for the opinion of others, must allow it to affect his actions.

These are the chains that make slaves of us all.

*

• (March 1st.)—Joy and happiness have entered the house. New light has awakened in me, too, as if my life were something more than mere darkness. Walpurga has a boy. Hansei's happiness is complete, and he never mentions the boy except as "the young freeholder."

*

The christening is over. I felt sorry that I was unable to accompany them to church, but I could not.

*

I have laid the peasant's garb aside. It was in place while I was a fugitive, but now I have no further need of it. I wear dresses of simple calico, like those worn by many of the country people who employ themselves with housework. All that I have retained is my green hat, which I find quite useful, as it helps to hide my face.

I have laid aside many outer garments; how many inner ones must I still put off?

*

Fear and anxiety are gradually leaving me.

I have been at the village, and for the first time. The houses stand apart, on the mountain meadows. Viewed from above, they almost look like a scattered flock of sheep.

*

The rushing of the waters and the rustling of the forests sound so strangely at night, and yet the rushing and rustling are unceasing. How vain, how small is the child of man!

*

Oh, how delightful it is to be awakened by the song of the finch, and to find all nature refreshed by the invigorating morning air!

*

(April 19th.)—A heavy fog all day. The mist forms a veil which hides nature's death and awakening from view.

*

The nightingale by yonder brook, sings all day long and through the night. What unwearying power! What an inexhaustible fount of song!

While I write, its song seems to come nearer, as if it knew that I long for it.

*

I see every opening bud, and wait to see the ferns unfold their leaves. Even the rough maple has a delicate blossom. Everything is blooming or singing. There is music, even in the cackling of the hens. The world is full of infinite variety.

*

Oh, how delightful to watch for every green leaf, and for the opening of every bud. Nature's greatest charm is that she is never in haste. She can wait, and all we need do is—to wait upon her.

*

At first, we attempt to note every stage of growth, but we soon find that an impossibility.

*

It needs but a single rainy day, and all the buds burst. Bright spring is with us once again. Spring produces a sort of mental unrest which seems to move in a course parallel with the impulse at work in nature.

*

The drooping birch is laden with rich clusters of blossoms, and its branches are swayed to and fro in mute yet melodious movements.

*

The best self-forgetfulness is to regard the things of this world with love and attention.—Perhaps attention already presupposes love, and that of the most unselfish kind.

*

A cuckoo comes quite close to the house at early morning and utters its cry.

✱

(Whitsuntide.)—The preparations for the festival afford much pleasure, more perhaps than the festival itself. What kneading and baking, and what joy at the successful completion of the festal cake.

Joy which we have prepared for ourselves is perfect joy. And now comes the festival. Trees and human beings seem blooming with life, and yonder forest is borne toward us in the Whitsuntide favors they bring into the house.

Hansei has a new suit of the style worn in this section of the country. When he walked over the farm to-day, the kindly "good-morning" which he bestowed upon every one seemed full of happiness.

I am very sorry that I am again unable to accompany them to church. The festal feeling reaches its climax in church-going, but, even at home, the air is laden with the fragrant odor of the birch and holiday cake.

✱

(May 24th.)—We have had a furious spring storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning. The trees swayed to and fro and bent as if they would break.

"That's bad," said my little pitchman, "though it's good for the rye. A storm in springtime brings cold weather, while one in midsummer makes the days warmer than before.

How well this symbolizes precocious passion.

The bright sunshine has returned. I have been out of doors. Millions of blossoms are strewn about the ground and, in the forest, lay many dead young birds. They had ventured out of their nests too soon; the rain had wet their young wings and they could not return. Besides that, the nest no longer contained room for them. Forsaken and hungry, there was nothing left them but death!

Nature is terrible. It labors long and patiently to bring forth a being which it suddenly and wantonly suffers to die.

✱

Sundays go hardest with me. One is used to look for something unusual on that day. We put on a particular dress and expect the world to do the same. On that day, more than on all others, I feel that I am in a strange world.

The brook murmurs and the birds sing, just as they did yesterday. What right have I to ask them to sing me a different song to-day?

Nature has no moods; they belong to man alone.
In this lies a heavy burden.

*

In former days, while watching the forms and colors of the clouds, I was obliged to look up into the sky. But now I see them resting on the earth below me.

I can pass hours, watching the passing clouds and their ever-changing forms as reflected on the mountains. The earth itself was fashioned from such fluid masses. No artist can realize the extent of this cloud-world, or its wealth of form. Before our thoughts attain fixed shape, they, too, must pass through this nebulous state, in which, however, we are unable to perceive them.

*

Singing birds, in great variety, have clustered at the edge of the forest. The notes of the lark, the yellow-hammer, the green finch, the blackbird, the thrush, the red-tail, and the titmouse are heard all at once. Only a few of the birds that build their nests deep in the forest, sing there.

*

In springtime, forest rills become brooks. In summer, naught is visible, save the dry bed of the stream. It is the same with our own lives.

*

When old Jochem hears me rejoice because spring has come, he always says: "What does it signify? In a few weeks, the days will begin to shorten again."

*

If human beings, like the trees, bore visible blossoms, these blossoms would assume a different shape and color, with each succeeding year. The blossoms of my soul were once so bright; but now—

*

For the first time in my life, I have seen a pair of eagles soaring in the air. What a life theirs must be! They hovered far overhead, and described a circle in their flight. About what were they circling? Then they soared still higher and vanished in the empyrean.

The world still contains spirits whose flights are as free and as bold as that of the eagle. There is no creature that soars above the king of birds, no enemy that can approach him. But man sends forth the fatal ball and thus exerts an influence in regions which the eye alone can pierce.

He too was filled with pride when he had shot an eagle. And why? Because it was a proof of his power, and he adorned my hat with the token of his victory. Ah, woe is me!

Why does this grief constantly return to me?

*

We women are never alone in nature. This is only another proof of the deep truth that lies in the old tradition. Man, created first, was alone; but woman, who came afterward, never existed alone. This repeats itself through the history of all nations, and a perplexing mystery is at last revealed to me.

*

In the world of fashion, just as in the park, the traces of footsteps are effaced by obsequious servants. There must be nothing to remind us of yesterday.

And yet their life is to form a part of history.

*

To cease evil, is not doing good.

I would like to accomplish some great deed. But where? Within myself alone.

*

My little pitchman is quite a changed being when among scenes of nature. He does not love nature. To use his own words, it merely amuses him. He delights in the most trifling peculiarities of bird-life, and how well he knows all the birds!

*

(Many rainy days.)—I long for the sun, and am almost dying for the want of it. I feel as if I were fading, as if

perishing with thirst—I cannot live without the sun. It is my debtor for the lovely May days of which I have been deprived. I must have them; they are my only comfort.

*

If I remain thus dependent upon the weather, permitting every cloud to darken my mind, and every shower to chill me with the feeling that I am forsaken, it were far better I were lying at the bottom of the lake, and that the boatman were telling those whom he was ferrying across: “Far below us, lies a young maid of honor.”—I have once before bade farewell to the sun, and I mean to be independent of it.

*

There are beings who know nothing of rain and sunshine, and yet live.

But there are, also, others who are filled with dew-forming power—but they are the calm, self-contained, powerful natures, whose life is an inner, rather than an outer, one.

*

(June 12th.)—After many hot days, there was rain last night. The drops are still glittering on every leaf and flower. Oh, the delightful morning that has succeeded the nocturnal storm! To have fully enjoyed such a morning is worth the trouble of living.

*

Jochem has a lark in a cage—he must have something shut up with him.

The lark affords me great delight. There are but few of them up here, for we have nothing but meadow land. They love to hover over the fields of grain down in the valley.

*

After the midsummer solstice, the woods become silent. The sun now merely ripens, and has ceased to call forth blossoms and song. The finch alone keeps up his merry lay.

*

From my window, I can see the white foal grazing in the meadow. He knows me. When I look up, he stands still for a while and looks at me, and then dashes hither

and thither at a furious rate. I have named him Wodan, and when I call him by that name, he comes to me.

I have sketched the foal, and am now carving it in birch. I think I shall succeed, but wood is obstinate, awkward stuff, after all. I lose my patience on slight provocation. I must try to overcome this.

*

Yesterday was a year since I lay at the foot of the rock. I could not write a word. My brain whirled with the thoughts of that day; but now it is over.

*

I don't think I shall write much more. I have now experienced all the seasons in my new world. The circle is complete. There is nothing new to come from without. I know all that exists about me, or that can happen. I am at home in my new world.

*

Unto Jesus the scribes and pharisees brought a woman who was to be stoned to death, and he said unto them: "Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone."

Thus it is written.

But I ask: How did she continue to live? She who was saved from being stoned to death; she who was pardoned, that is, condemned to live? How did she live on? Did she return to her home? How did she stand with the world? And how with her own heart?

No answer. None.

I must find the answer in my own experience.

*

"Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone." These are the noblest, the greatest words ever uttered by human lips, or heard by human ear. They divide the history of the human race into two parts. They are the "let there be light" of the second creation. They divide and heal my little life, too, and create me anew.

*

Has one who is not wholly without sin, a right to offer precepts and reflections to others?

Look into your own heart. What are you?

-

Behold my hands. They are hardened by toil. I have done more than merely lift them in prayer.

*

Since I am alone, I have not seen a letter of print. I have no book and wish for none, and this is not in order to mortify myself, but because I wish to be perfectly alone.

*

She who renounces the world, and, in her loneliness, still cherishes the thought of eternity, has assumed a heavy burden.

Convent life is not without its advantages. The different voices that join in a chorale sustain each other, and when the tone at last ceases, it seems to float away on the air and vanish by degrees. But here I am quite alone. I am priest and church, organ and congregation, confessor and penitent, all in one, and my heart is often so heavy, as if I must needs have another to help me bear the load. "Take me up and carry me, I cannot go further!" cries my soul. But then I rouse myself again, seize my scrip and my pilgrim's staff and wander on, solitary and alone; and while I wander, strength returns to me.

*

For the first time in a year, I saw a carriage driving up the white road that leads through the valley. Those who were sitting in it, could not know how my eyes followed them. Whither go ye? who are ye?

*

I must write again. I believe that I at last know the full meaning of the word "*gemüthlich*." It includes careful thought for the comfort of others even in the merest trifles, and requires one to put himself in another's place. It is the heart, expressing itself in poetry; it is feeling, clothing itself in the garb of fancy.

True culture includes this feeling; for what is culture but the power to put one's self in another's place, and "to see ourselves as others see us"?

My opinion is still unchanged. Hansei seems dull and awkward, and yet he has far more of the best culture than many a one who is decorated with orders and epaulettes and is regarded as one of the most charming of cavaliers.

*

I constantly keep thinking that there is something in me which I have not yet discovered. It gives me no rest. Is it an idea, a feeling, a word, or a deed? I know not, but I feel that there is something within me that seeks a vent. Perhaps death may come before I discover it.

*

Old Jochem still remembers a few verses from the hymn-book, and keeps repeating them to himself, but in such perverted shape that they are sheer nonsense. I offered to teach him the verses correctly, but this made him very angry, and he told me that I was trying to teach him something new, and that it would not answer. His nonsense seems dear to him. He does not understand it, and the air of mystery thus imparted to it renders it far more impressive.

*

One who has never experienced the feeling, cannot know what it is to long for a few words of conversation with your equals. It is a consuming thirst. Any one who can speak my language would serve my purpose. I cannot endure this strain. I feel as if I were in a strange land, and were vainly listening for the beloved accents of my native tongue. It is well for me that I can work.

*

As long as I had Walpurga with me in the palace, I could speak to her freely on various subjects. When I came to her, it was a change, a stepping out of the sphere in which my thoughts were accustomed to move. But here, where I have her and nothing else, it is different. It is not pride—for what have I to do with pride? Is it alienation, or is it sullen listlessness?

*

Naïveté pleases us only for a short time. Wisdom always remains attractive—such wisdom as mother Beate's or Gunther's. Yes, I long for him most of all.

Wisdom is cultured *naïveté* or, to speak more correctly, the *naïveté* of genius. It is the rosy apple; *naïveté*, the blossom from which it sprang, still dwells in the fruit, as its core.

Night and day, the various elemental influences, clear

perception and the mysterious forces of nature:—all these help to perfect the finest fruit.

*

I cannot look upon work as the noblest thing in life. The perfect man is he who does nothing, who cherishes himself—; such is the life of the gods, and what is man but the god of creation?

My heresy thus expresses itself. I have confessed and repented of it. But in the confessor's chair sits one who is in the right when he says: "Very well, my child! And so the noblest and most exalted life is simply existence, void of effort. But, since no one can live unless some other being labors for him, it follows that all must do something. Nothing can be had without pay. The one class has not been sent into the world merely to exist, nor the other merely to labor."

*

How happy I might become if there were no past. A life hereafter, filled with memories—how sad the thought! And yet without memories, would it be a second life?

*

True joy at last dwells with us. Whenever we partake of anything, Walpurga always says: "We planted this ourselves; on such a day, we set our beans. I put them in Burgei's hand, and she dropped them on the garden beds."

And thus it seems to be with all things. The past is being renewed to us.

*

I have found it difficult to go over the same task, again and again. But the constant repetition is what constitutes labor. Without that, it is mere amusement.

Nature constantly repeats herself, and we must serve her by imitating her. She repeats herself through her laws; man, through his duties.

I have, nevertheless, indulged in variations, and not without success. While walking through the stable, I observed the cow lowing and turning toward her suckling calf. I have carved the figures in wood.

I should like to imitate every object in nature—to

create the world anew, as it were, so that men might see all things as I see them.

I thank Thee, Eternal Spirit, for bestowing these gifts upon me.

*

The chief aim of life is not joy, nor is it repose. It must be labor. Perhaps there is no chief aim, after all.

*

Love and labor are the body and soul of mankind. Happy is he in whom they are united. I have forfeited love—nothing is left me but labor.

*

My white foal! It looks at me, and I look at it in return. Free and uncontrolled, it scampers about the field, and yet I seize it and send it out into the world, so that others, too, may delight in the pretty, playful animal!

I have sketched it in various positions. Its every movement is replete with strength and grace.

*

I have carved the figure of my white foal, and have completed it with incredible rapidity. My friends are astonished, and so am I. I look upon it as a success.

My little pitchman—why should I dislike to mention it?—carried the figure down to the dealer. It grieved me to part with my work, but the little magic horse must, and does, support me. It was sold at a good price, and I received a large order, besides.

*

Sometimes, I find myself wondering what Countess Brinkenstein, pious Constance, Schnabelsdorf, or Bronnen, would say if they were to see me now; and at such moments, I am obliged to look around, in order to satisfy myself that they are not present.

So long as I cannot govern my imagination, I am not free. Fancy is the most powerful of despots.

*

Our fountain gushes and bubbles the whole night through, and when the moonlight rests upon it, it is lovelier and more peaceful than ever. The earth bounteously gives forth its healing waters. They flow unceasingly. All that we need do is to go to the spring and

drink. My favorite seat is near there. Its waters sometimes suddenly increase in volume and swiftness, as if they were bringing me a special message. Perhaps it is all caused by the currents of air, and I may be mistaken after all. One easily gives way to reverie when by the spring.

*

Gundel, the little pitchman's daughter, affords me much much pleasure. The honest, kind-hearted, simple-minded creature is now full of joy; she loves, and is loved in return.

One of the farm hands is a native of Hansei's birth-place. He was once in the cuirassiers, and this faithful, but rough and ill-favored lad, is Gundel's lover. A girl whom no one has noticed, whose life has been constant drudgery, is invested with new importance, both in her own eyes and in those of others, as soon as she becomes the object of a man's love. All that she does is regarded as good and pretty, and she is at once lifted up out of her lowly and forgotten state.

Love is the crown of every life, a diadem even on the lowliest head.

When Gundel goes about her rough work—to draw water, or to feed the cattle—she seems radiant with new-born happiness.

Although I have said nothing, she notices that I am interested in her, and she often ask whether there is anything she can do for me.

I wish that riches were again mine, so that I might make these lovers happy.

*

How foolish is the desire to be ever original. Nature constantly repeats herself. The rose of to-day is like that of yesterday.

Men determine for themselves—and in this lies their torment.

*

I have not yet put vanity away from me. I am still moved to delight whenever a happy expression flows from my pen. But is this really vanity? I think not. Although alone in my cell, I adorn myself for my own sake.

Beauty has become a necessity to me. I must be surrounded by objects of beauty, and must also possess it in myself. Uncouthness does not offend me, but ugliness affects me just as discords do. In the so-called cultivated world, a rude expression excites a deprecatory "Ah!" while elegant vulgarity is smiled upon.

*

I am obliged to read old Jochem's bond to him, at least once a week. Although he knows it by heart, he insists upon hearing it again and satisfying himself that it is all right, and properly signed and sealed. He does not suffer it to leave his hands. I am obliged to read it while he holds it. He trusts no one.

The old man almost seems to regret that he has nothing to complain of, and is constantly urging me to prepare a memorial to the king, so that he may have it at hand when required. How strange that the king should always seem to him the personification of right and justice.

He has much to tell me about the late king, under whom he served. He describes him as a perfect gentleman, and says that he often hunted in this region. He has been informed that the present king is not much of a hunter, and that he sticks to the priests, who, in return, grant him absolution. He always concludes by asking whether I have ever seen the king, and, although I have answered "No" a hundred times, he keeps on repeating the same question.

*

Hansei was right, after all! I feel as if I ought to crave his pardon. It is a disgusting sight to behold the old pensioner at his meals; and if one does not intend to have him at table for the remainder of his life, one had better not begin with him. Hansei's objection was kind and clever, not rude and ill-natured. Kind resolves that cannot be fully carried out, had better not be attempted.

When I spoke of this to Walpurga to-day, she answered me, through her tears, saying: "I'd a thousand times rather hear you praise him than me."

*

It is not until humanity becomes a duty that we

can truly know whether its exercise is a pleasure or a sacrifice.

Naturally enough, I have treated Jochem kindly, have often had him visit me, and have tried to entertain him. Now he will not leave me to myself, and robs me of my only possession—solitude. Although it cost me an effort, I was obliged to insist upon his only visiting me during certain hours. But even that is irksome, for I am no longer perfect mistress of my time. When the bell in the valley tolls the hour of twelve, the old man comes and sits with me. Our conversations are not very fruitful or suggestive. His stock of ideas is but a limited one, and topics that are not related to them fail to excite his interest. Besides that, he coughs a great deal, and is always asking me to tell him about my father. He seems to forget that I have already told him that I never knew my father. It was the saddest thing I ever said, but I did not know my father while he lived. I understood him not, although he attempted to reveal himself to me. From the depths of my soul, I cry out to him: "My poor father! you tried to perfect yourself, but your last action, although it was meant to arouse me, was the act of one who was in fetters. I now accomplish what you falteringly began. While laboring for you, my love for you has become full and complete. You are now near to me, and have become what you longed to be—my preserver."

*

I have at last made it a rule that the old man shall only come when I send for him. I could not do otherwise. And this I find almost worse than to have fixed hours for his visits, for now I am often obliged to stop and ask myself: "Isn't it time to call the old man? He won't disturb me now." He thus engages my thoughts more than before.

I must learn to bear with him patiently, and Jochem will surely improve. When I say to him: "I can't talk now," he is satisfied. All that he asks is to be permitted to sit there in silence.

*

How well one sleeps when tired with work. How good it is to have hunger and fatigue, when one is safely able to satisfy their demands.

In the great world, they eat and sleep, but are never tired or hungry.

I never knew how much I used to talk, and how necessary conversation had become to me. But now that I have learned how to be silent, and live alone with my own thoughts, I do know; I now see that the presence of others exerted an electric influence upon me, overcharging my nature. I was never unreal, but was more than I really am. I made others cheerful, but how rarely was I so!

*

Labor is the consoling friend and companion of solitude.

He who has not lived alone, does not know what labor is.

*

I am often reminded of Dante's: "There can be no greater suffering than, in one's misery, to remember happier days." But why does he not tell us what kind of happiness he means? It must always be delightful to remember innocent joys, though the unhappiness that follows be ever so great.

But Francesca refers to happiness allied with guilt. And I know that she is right.

I still remember my father's parting advice: "Indulge only in such pleasures as it will afford you pleasure to look back upon."

*

What strange, hidden springs flow through one's soul. Ever since the sad saying of Dante's occurred to me, all my thoughts have been translating themselves into Italian.

*

It often seems to me as if it were sinful thus to bury myself alive. My voice is no longer heard in song, and much more that dwells within me has become mute.

Is this right?

If my only object in life were to be at peace with myself, it would be well enough—but I long to labor and to do something for others. Yet where and what shall it be?

*

When I first heard that the beautifully carved furniture

of the great and wealthy is the work of prisoners, it made me shudder. And now, although I am not deprived of freedom, I am in much the same condition. Those who have disfigured life should, as an act of expiation, help to make life more beautiful for others. The thought that I am doing this comforts and sustains me.

*

My work prospers. But last winter's wood is not yet fit for use. My little pitchman has brought me some that is old, excellent and well seasoned, having been part of the rafters of an old house that has just been torn down. We work together cheerfully, and our earnings are considerable.

*

Vice is the same everywhere, except that here it is more open. Among the masses, vice is characterized by coarseness; among the upper classes, by meanness.

The latter shake off the consequences of their evil deeds, while the former are obliged to bear them.

*

The rude manners of these people are necessary, and are far preferable to polite deceit. They must needs be rough and rude. If it were not for its coarse, thick bark, the oak could not withstand the storm.

I have found that this rough bark covers more tenderness and sincerity than does the smoothest surface.

*

Jochem told me, to-day, that he is still quite a good walker, but that a blind man finds it very troublesome to go anywhere; for, at every step, he is obliged to grope about, so that he may feel sure of his ground before he firmly plants his foot on the earth.

Is it not the same with me? Am I not obliged to be sure of the ground before I take a step?

Such is the way of the fallen.

Ah! why does everything I see or hear become a symbol of my life?

*

Our life here is like that of plants. Our chief care is as to the weather. Rain and sunshine affect us as they do the plants that require their aid. Hansei often com-

plains that he does not understand the weather signs hereabouts. In his old home by the lake, he could always tell how the weather would be. His want of knowledge on this subject prevents him from feeling quite at home here. Our little pitchman, however, is a most reliable weather-prophet, and has thus come to be looked upon as quite an important personage. I am his docile scholar and he is quite proud of me. Although he is quite intimate with me, and often indulges in pleasantries, he never fails to treat me with great respect.

Those who know nothing of etiquette, often make up for the want of it by their tact. I congratulated the little pitchman last week. It was on the occasion of his birthday, and when I shook hands with him, his face grew scarlet. He thanked me heartily, and kept saying that when he got to heaven, he would bespeak good quarters for me, and that his old woman wouldn't get angry if he possessed both her and myself in the next world. He is always happy when serving me. When he builds a fire in my stove, he ogles every log, as if it ought to feel it an honor to be permitted to help keep me warm.

*

The census troubled me greatly to-day. After dinner, Hanasei produced the blank which he was required to fill, and handed it to Walpurga, with the words: "Do you write, or let her"—meaning me—"write her name, her age, and where she comes from?"

We were in great tribulation, until Walpurga, at last, solved the difficulty by saying that there was no need of telling everything.

The remark was quite opportune and afforded a convenient excuse to Hansei, who was greatly annoyed by another schedule, in which he was expected to state the annual yield of milk and of butter, the number of chickens on the farm, etc., etc. Hansei was angry at the officials, and felt quite sure that they meant to impose another tax. His wrath saved me, but defrauded the state out of one soul.

The people hereabouts look upon the state and its functionaries as their natural enemies, and have no scruples as to deceiving them.

*

For the first time in my life, I have seen a tree felled. I was filled with awe when I saw it topple for a moment, before the final crash. It reminded me of the fate of a man who is, at one blow, hurled from sunny heights into the depths of misery.

Hansei is having a path cut through the forest. It passes by my window, and the clearing will afford me a fine view. He was quite happy when I told him of this.

*

Hansei was at the capital. On his return, he unwrapped a large parcel and, with conscious pride, showed us what sensible presents he had bought. They were the pictures of the king and queen.

In his kindness of heart, he offered to let me hang up the pictures in my room, and was quite provoked to find that his wife wanted to keep them for herself. I satisfied him at last by saying: "The sitting-room belongs to us all."

But the pictures seemed to be looking at me constantly, and made it unpleasant for me to remain in the room. Walpurga noticed this and, to my great relief, removed them to her bedroom. Hansei does not take notice of such matters.

The king's portrait represents him in the dress of a citizen. Is it a sign that—?

*

Hansei at last reveals his plan. It is quite a clever stroke of his to begin by cutting roads through the forest, so that the beams can be brought down from far up the mountain, and thus fetch him thrice as much money as if they were cut into smaller logs.

*

(April 3d.)—At first, there is so much to observe. The whole world seems like a young child, or like the first verdure of spring. Later, one grows accustomed to it all, and it seems as if things were always and everywhere alike. It seems to me that life would be insupportable, if the world were ever new and left us no repose.

Habit, our second mother, is a good mother, too.

*

They have fastened a rope to the feet of my white foal,

so that it cannot run away. It can now only move about slowly. The freedom and grace of its movements are gone, even before it is put in harness.

Oh, how many human beings have a like fate!

*

I love to watch the rain calmly descending upon the earth. If I were not obliged to work, I could remain by my window for hours, lost in reverie and looking out and listening, for it seems to me as if I were endowed with a million eyes and could see every drop as it falls on the half-open buds. But here, we are all constantly at work. I am ashamed to sit here with my hands in my lap. The rain in springtime is soft and beautiful, lending voice, form and substance to the air, and to every tiny rill.

*

Formerly, I always required a spyglass, where I no longer need it.

It is because we do not live in the open air, that we become near-sighted.

*

The rose may be improved by cultivation, and the thorns growing on its stalk may become different from what they were; but they are thorns, nevertheless.

*

(April 15th.)—I have heard the yellow-hammer, for the first time this year. In springtime its notes are far more rapid and short than in summer.

*

(April 23d.)—The first swallow has come. Now may we softly lull ourselves to rest in the consciousness that sweet spring is with us once again. The uncertain and anxious fluttering from one fair day to another, is at an end.

My little pitchman says: "Swallows and starlings come and go in the night." The idea is quite suggestive.

*

(End of April.)—We have had a shower. Oh, what fragrant odors it awakened in flowers, grass and trees! And this fragrance floats off into infinite space, while we short-lived children of man imagine that it all exists for us. Everything that exists, exists for itself alone.

The *immortelle* is one of the earliest plants to shoot forth its leaves. It grows by the edge of the forest, and will thrive even in poor soil.

*

(May 1st.)—We have had a cold, rainy day, with hail. Toward evening, when the rain had ceased and the drops on the trees and bushes sparkled in the golden sunlight, I heard the cuckoo, for the first time this year. He flew from forest to forest, from mountain to mountain, crying everywhere.

I now know why they say: "Go to the cuckoo."* The cuckoo has no nest, no home of its own and, according to popular tradition, is obliged to sleep on a different tree every night. "Go to the cuckoo," therefore means: "be restless and fugitive; be at home nowhere."

When I told the grandmother of my discovery, she said: "You've hit it exactly. You manage to get some good out of everything. You've won it."

She meant that I had won the game of life.

*

My kind little pitchman has given me an unexpected treat. He has arranged a seat for me, up by the maple tree on the projecting rock. But he cut away the bushes, and thus destroyed the privacy of my favorite haunt. Nevertheless, I find it pleasant to sit there. No human being is perfectly satisfied with what another may do for him, but we may be grateful, for all; and gratitude is the soil on which joy thrives.

*

(First Sunday in May.)—On Sunday afternoons, when I may not work, I long to drive through the park in a caleche which is easy on its springs; not to be always walking or obliged to be doing something. To move through the world in the springtime, seated on soft cushions and drawn by fleet horses, or, what is still better, to ride along the turfy forest paths, while guiding and controlling a strong power—I can never forget that.

*

At night, when I look up into the vast, starry vault, with its myriad glittering orbs, I find it difficult to sit or

* Geh zum Kukuk!"

to walk. I think of the nights when, lying back in my carriage, I drove out into the wide world and looked up at the stars. How free everything was then!

I am still much affected by trifles.

*

There are days when I cannot endure the forest, when I do not wish for shade. I must then have the sun—nothing but light and sunshine. At such times, I walk along the hot and shadeless meadow paths.

*

I now have a window-shelf filled with flower-pots. How different when one has to wait for the flowers to come up, instead of receiving them in full bloom from the gardener.

*

The evenings are my enemy—always heavy and dull. Morn is my friend, for then everything is bright. How different it once was!

*

The mental state of those who are out in the world may be likened to the physical condition of Baroness Constance. There is a constant ringing in her ears, and she knows nothing of holy repose or perfect silence. It is not until one ceases to know anything of the world, or to care for it, that this mental ringing in the ears ceases, and holy repose and calm are vouchsafed us. Every sound which then enters is as a marvel.

*

The grandmother is quiet and alert, just as occasion may require. She is not one of the ever busy and excited ones, and yet she is never idle. With her great knowledge of human nature, she yet retains her kindly feelings toward all. She has thought much and yet is *naïve*. She treats me with affectionate frankness, and says that she has, all her life, wished to have a clever person about her—one who had learnt something and with whom she could talk about everything. And she does this to the letter. I am obliged to explain a thousand things to her, and she is sincerely grateful for any information I can give her.

"I like to get my kindling-wood ready in time," said

she to-day. Translated into our language, this means that she likes to think over things beforehand.

But there are so many dark doors which we pass with closed eyes.

*

While watching the foal to-day, I could not help thinking that the first man who tamed a beast—that is, subdued it so that it would bear him and support him—was the first to assert the power of humanity. Other animals can kill each other, but not one of them can guide another life to its own advantage. There are no new species of beasts to be tamed now. Men are, in truth, becoming poets. They condense the intangible forces and say to steam, to light, and to the electric spark: "Come and do my bidding."

*

I have bought some sugar with which to feed my white foal. It is a great pleasure, and to-day I could not help thinking that, if any one saw us, it must have been a pretty picture.

Oh, how vain and trifling I still am!

*

Every large and extended estate, be it this very farm, or the court at the capital, has its vassals, its servants, its parasites, its willing subjects. The world is the same everywhere.

*

Peasant life is not the elegant world, but there must be plow horses as well as carriage horses.

*

To live out of one's self, to give full sway to one's native temperament, to remain unmoved by external influences:—thus may one learn to know himself and that which is highest. It is in the desert waste that God reveals himself to the individual heart. The bush burns and yet is not consumed.

*

Whenever I look at the mountains, I am impressed anew with their sublimity.

The world below me is covered by a sea of mist from which the mountain peaks here and there protrude.

With every day, as it were, I behold the first day of creation.

I am beginning to understand the idea of the sublime. It is the awe of greatness, not the awe of fear. I feel as if dwelling in a temple.

*

Solitude often makes one dull and torpid. I sometimes experience this even in myself.

On a rainy Sunday, Hansei will often stand looking out of the window, for hours at a time. I feel satisfied that his first thoughts are of a horse, a cow, the sale of his wood, or of some acquaintance. At last, he falls into a sort of waking dream, and thinks of nothing at all. One awakes from this childlike lying down and gazing into the world, as from strengthening and refreshing sleep. It is indeed only another form of elementary existence.

*

Judging by my notes, I, at one time, thought this merely a station in my journey, where one is detained by interests or adventure; but now I see that I am at the goal.

I will lay down my load, as the grandmother advised me to do, and break the chests to pieces. I shall remain here for the rest of my life. And now that I have firmly resolved to remain—even if I were discovered to-morrow, and the whole world heaped its scorn upon me—I have a happy feeling of being at home. I am here, and here I shall remain.

I was not reminded of all this until to-day, when my little pitchman said: "You look so pleased, so—I don't know how, but—you never looked so before."

Yes, my dear little pitchman, you are right; it was not until to-day that I felt myself truly at home. I have struck root, like the cherry sapling before my window.

*

The old pensioner said to me to-day: "Behold, my child, age takes much from us; but I can still dream as beautifully as I did in my youth."

*

Of all the flowers, I find the heaviest dew on the rose.

Is that because of the rich perfume? Does the perfume form dew? No green leaf ever has so much dew upon it, as the leaf of a flower.

*

I often feel tempted to tell the story of Leah to the whole household, Jochem included.

It often annoys me, when I think that I do not impart all I have to my friends; but how much more it would annoy me, if I were misunderstood by them.

Even in our day, art and religion are far asunder.

The latter can be imparted to all; the former cannot.

*

It is impossible to interest the masses in refined pleasures. During the week, they have nothing but hard work; and on Sunday, they find recreation at ninepins, or in dancing in heavy boots. They require rude pleasures and a rude faith.

*

(On Sunday, while the bells are ringing.)—Art does not enter into the life of the masses. For them, plastic or dramatic art, or the higher order of music or literature, do not exist.

The only idea they have of another life, over and above the trivial present, is embodied by the church, and yet that which is best in all religions is the poetry they contain.

*

What must become of one who, for years, does not read a serious book, or does not read at all, and thus takes in no great or well worked-out ideas? If he be rich and noble, his life becomes vain play; if he be poor and lowly, it becomes vain labor. And, for this reason, nature has given us song and history, has established religion which offers its jewels to all, so that every one may drink of the fermented wine of all knowledge and all art. But new wine must always be added, or—

*

(July 30th.)—The whole world was veiled in mist, and the sun was hidden from view. It seemed as if the artistic creative eye were brooding over the form it was about to usher into life. And then the cloud-flakes were

rent asunder. For a moment, the mountain world was free. The mists disappear; but new ones arise from the earth.

*

Out in the world the fear of being ridiculed prevents people from expressing enthusiastic admiration of moonlight. When the whole world is illumined its soft glow, and no sound is heard save the murmur of the sparkling brook, I am filled with ecstatic delight.

*

Temptation returns, and says: "You offend against nature by wasting your rich gifts on tasks that others could accomplish as well as you. Go out into the world, and consider your present life merely as a state of transition."

No! I shall remain!

When I stand on the mountain and gaze out into the world, I often ask myself: "Art thou still the same Irma? What vestige is left of thy past glittering life?"

Nothing but the heavy burden that oppresses my soul.

*

Weather-talk is considered a bore, and yet there is no subject more important. Plants and animals feel the changes, for they determine their fate from day to day. And are there not men whose whole life is bound up in the question: "Will the day be clear or cloudy?"

The cloud that, like a girdle, encircles yonder peak, has rested there, motionless, the whole day; and thus, too, there are days when a mist seems to be resting upon one's soul, enveloping our inner being in darkness.

*

Play of the features is distinctively a human attribute. The human face reveals changing emotions; that of the beast does not.

The beast, moreover, has always but one and the same tone. The bark of a dog is ever the same, be it in joy or anger; the only change is in the temper. Or is it only to our ears that these tones seem alike?

*

If a human being were to utter such inharmonious and disconnected tones as those produced by the mavis over-

head, it would drive me to distraction. But why do these tones not affect me in the same way? Why do they almost please me? Because they are natural to the bird. But man, having the power to choose, must see to it that his tones are melodious.

*

What is all our knowledge? We do not even know what to-morrow's weather will be. There is no infallible indicator of the changes in this most essential condition of life. Nor do the farmers, although they are so fond of talking on the subject, know anything about it.

*

Harvest time is the dramatic turning-point of the year. At that time, all is haste and suspense, and men and women are alike uncongenial.

*

One need but listen to the pensioner, to learn how thoroughly corrupt the world is. His expletives have all the force of cudgels. He is constantly trying to sound me in regard to Hansei and Walpurga, and would like me to tell him of their faults. It worries him to hear them well spoken of.

*

A remark of Gunther's occurred to me to-day.

"We are all passionate; the difference between individuals being only a difference in rhythm. He who goes downstairs at one bound, may break his neck; he whose descent is gradual and careful, will remain uninjured."

*

I never look at the clock. With me, life is no longer divided into hours. I hear the bell in the valley at morning, noon and evening, and regulate my actions accordingly. The clock is in the church tower. The church tells us the time of day.

*

Old Jochem is ill. The physician who attends him is quite a jovial character, and maintains that Jochem would live many years longer if he had only been able to feed his anger and keep his lawsuits, for these furnished him with excitement and amusement, at the same time. As long as he had these, there was still something left to fight

for in the world and some one to abuse, and it was this that had kept him up. Now that his life was a peaceful one, he would, in all likelihood, die of *ennui*.

"You smile," said the physician to me. "Believe me, I am quite serious. An infant in the cradle that does not cry, and a chained dog that does not bark, have neither life nor energy and will surely die."

He may be right, to a certain extent.

I feel under restraint when with the physician; for he regards me with such a strange, scrutinizing air.

"Oh, Thou good God! The grass is coming up! But they'll bury me in the earth and I'll never come up again!" was Jochem's lament.

*

The old man is dead. This very night he passed away in his sleep. No one was with him at the time.

He died like a forest tree which has lost its power of absorbing nourishment.

Little Burgei now sleeps with me. My friends will listen to nothing else, and will not suffer me to be alone at night.

*

I am filled with dread. A corpse lies on the floor above. Beside it, is a solitary lamp that is left to burn until the dead man is buried. And yet I feel that I must conquer this feeling of dread! Yes, I shall.

It still moves me deeply to think of how the old man remembered me. He sent for me yesterday; and, when I went up to his bedside, he said: "Irmgard, you were a stranger and yet were kind to me—I'd like to leave you something. I've been thinking the matter over and find that I still have something to give you. It's the best of all that I own. It would do me no good to have it buried with me, and it will be of great benefit to you, for there's a charm in it. Here it is—take it—it's the bullet that struck me on the third rib. Take good care of it. He who bears with him a bullet that has once hit a man, is in no danger of sudden, unexpected death. You can rely on that! And now I've something to ask you: Tell me, what was your father's name? You've told me that he's dead. When I get to heaven, I'll hunt him up and tell

him that you're quite a good girl; a little bit queer, perhaps, but right good for all. I'll tell your father that, and it'll be good news for him."

I could not tell him the name—how could I? All I could do was to thank him for giving me what had been so precious in his own eyes. And, strange to say, when I take the bullet in my hand and look at it, it agitates me greatly.

I will now prepare myself to follow the old man to his grave.

*

I was at the churchyard while the old man was buried. I shall lie there, too, some day.

*

I feel as if death might be conquered by the will. I am determined to live; I will not die. Is force of will the hidden thing within me, that I am ever seeking? And yet, I have no will. No one has. All our life, all our thoughts, are simply the necessary result of events and experiences, of waking perception and nocturnal dreams. Like the beasts, we may change the scene; but, the greater one, the prison that confines us, we cannot change. We cannot quit the earth. The laws of gravitation and attraction hold our souls fast as well as our bodies. Far above me, move the stars, and I am nothing more than a flower or a blade of grass clinging to the earth. The stars look down at me and I look up to them, and yet we cannot join each other.

*

A reigning prince has visited our farm. His highness Grubersepp, of whom Walpurga has often spoken to me, has arrived, bringing his little son, or—to speak more correctly—his two black horses and his son with him. The house is all bustle, and every one seems as proud and happy as if a reigning prince had actually come.

Grubersepp looked at me with a curious air.

"Is that prim-looking girl," said he to Hansei, while pointing backward with his thumb, "one of your wife's relations?"

"Yes; my wife—" Hansei muttered something—I saw that it went hard with him to tell a lie, and, above

all, to the great farmer to whom he was showing his property.

Among the peasants, it is just the same as elsewhere. Only the great ones know each other. But their intercourse is beautiful and impressive, and, although they exchange no friendly words, they serve each other by friendly actions.

The family have been made happy, for Grubersepp has said that the farm was in good order; and when Grubersepp says that, it is as much as if the intendant should say: "divine."

During the two days Grubersepp spent here, there was no rest in the house; that is, every one was busy thinking of him. Now everything is running in its accustomed groove, and every face is radiant with joy. No matter how well satisfied one may be with himself, it is something quite different to receive words of approval from the lips of another, and especially so, when the words of commendation come from a man so exalted as Grubersepp.

*

I am still trembling with fright. I was in the woods to-day. I was sitting on my bench, and saw some one walking among the trees. Now and then he would stop to gather a flower or pick up a stone. He came near and—who was it?

It was Gunther, the friend for whose presence I had so often longed. He asked me, in his deep, clear voice: "Child, does this road lead down to the village?"

I felt as if choking, and could not utter a word. I pointed to the footpath and, in fear and trembling, arose from my seat. He asked me: "Are you dumb, poor child?"—This saved me. I am dumb; I cannot speak. Without uttering a word, I fled from him and, when I found myself alone, I wept longer than I have for many years. I wanted to hurry after him, but he had gone. I could not support myself. My limbs gave way under me. At last I was calm—all is over—all must be over.

*

I have had long and troubled days. My work did not go as smoothly as it should have done, and much went amiss with me. The world without has aroused me.

*

I thank fate that I have learned to use my eyes. Wherever I look, I see something that delights me and gives me food for thought. The noblest joys and the most widely diffused are those the eye affords us.

*

I am delighted to find that the little pitchman knows every bird by its song. The proverb says: "A bird is known by its feathers." That is a matter of course, for few know them by their song. Their plumage is permanent; their song is fleeting and fitful. The former is fixed; the latter is not.

*

I now listen, with perfect unconcern, to the groaning of the forest trees, which so alarmed me during that night of terrors. And how strange! as soon as a bird begins to sing, the groaning ceases. What causes this?

*

I have received fresh orders, and am all right again. But my little pitchman keeps ailing. At first, it almost vexed me, but I conquered the selfish habits that tyrannized over me. I have served him faithfully, in requital for the services he has done me. I nursed him carefully, and now he is quite well again.

I am not so selfish, after all; for I have gained the friendship of good human beings. But I cannot do good to those who do not concern me. I belong to myself and to an infinitely small circle; beyond that I cannot go.

*

When I sit here in silence and solitude, and look at the one room in which I live and hope to die, I sometimes give way to horrible fits of depression. Here is my chair, my table, my workbench, my bed. These are mine until I am laid in the grave; but there is not one human soul that belongs to me.

I feel so oppressed, at such moments, that I would like to cry out aloud, and it is with difficulty that I regain my composure. Work, however, aids me.

*

For one brief hour, I have imagined myself possessed of omniscience.

It was yesterday morning, during the hour from eleven

until twelve. A light sun-shower passed over us, and then all grew bright again, and, in my mind's eye, I saw how thousands of beings were spending that hour. I saw the laborer in the forest, the king in his cabinet, the sewing-woman in her garret, the miner in the shaft, the bird on the tree, the lizard on the rock. I saw the child sitting in school, and the dying old man drawing his last breath. I saw the ship, the coquette rouging herself, and the poor working-woman weeding in the fields. I saw all—everything. I passed one hour of infinity.

And now I am fettered again—a small, isolated, miserable, stammering child. The one great thought of eternity passes like a fugitive through my mind, and finds no resting-place there. I must again hold fast to trifles.

I shall return to my workbench.

I have read, somewhere, that the Arabians wash their hands before prayer; when in the desert, where they can find no water, they wash them in sand and dust. The dust of labor purifies us.

*

The masses should have no books, but should talk with, and listen to, each other.

Books serve to isolate man; that which is told us by word of mouth is far more potent.

*

The teachings—or, rather, the experiences—of a ruined worldling have two things in their favor. She who has gone astray has become observant of everything, and is, therefore, the best guide. And, besides that, it seems to me that those who receive a precept from the lips of one who is perfectly pure have no choice left them; for purity is the highest authority, and its teachings must be accepted. But when a ruined being speaks to us, every word must be tested. It will not do to reject it at once; and this is well, for it makes one free.

*

The swallows are departing. They gather in flocks which, like thick clouds, darken the air and, with lightning speed, they move in their zig-zag course. How they can keep together in such irregular movements passes our comprehension. When, or by what means,

do they signify to each other when a sharp turn is to be taken?

The thought of flying suggests a sphere of life of which we can form no conception. And yet we imagine that we understand the world. What is fixed, we may comprehend; at least, the portion that is fixed.—Beyond that, all is conjecture.

*

I overheard Franz, Gundel's lover, saying to her: "A woman who looked just like Irmgard was once with the queen at the military maneuvers; and she wore the uniform of our regiment, and rode up and down the line."

If the soldier were to recognize and betray me?

How the confused feelings that fill the human heart seem to play at hide and seek with each other. With all my misery, it is not without a certain feeling of triumph that I learn that my image has impressed itself on a thousand memories.

*

I have not yet accustomed myself to go out alone, and it often seems to me as if a servant must be walking after me. Ah! what an artificial life we all lead.

I have spent a whole day alone in the woods. Oh, how happy I was! I lay on the ground listening to the rustling of the leaves overhead, and the prattling of the brook below. If I could but end my days here like a wounded doe—for I am one, and drops of blood mark my track.—No, I am well again. I was once in the world; that is, in another world; and now I lead a new life.

*

The little pitchman knew my father. During one summer, he worked in our forest, gathering pitch, and my father, who understood everything, went up to him and taught him how to boil the pitch in order to obtain a better and purer article than he would otherwise have got.

"Oh, what a man he was! I only wish you'd known him," said the little pitchman to me. "He was so good. Many a one has told me, since then, how he used to help everybody. He knew all about everything. He taught me that you can get the best turpentine from the larches. He never liked to give anything to people, but he wasn't

stingy. He helped all who'd work, and showed them how things might be done with less trouble and with greater profit, and that was better than giving them money. Every year he would lend them some money, so that they could buy a pig, and when they'd sold it, they had to pay him back. They often laughed at him and gave him a nickname, too, but it was an honor to him. Yes—and would you believe it?—he had a great misfortune. His children deserted him."

How these words rent my heart!

During the whole evening, the terrible mark on my forehead burned like fire.

*

This is the anniversary of my return to the summer palace.

At that time, I dreamt that a star had fallen down on me, and that a man, with averted gaze, was saying: "Thou too, art alone!"

There are depths of the soul, which no safety-lamp ever enters, and where all light is extinguished. I turn away—for naught dwells there but the angry storm-wind.

*

My thoughts go back to my childhood. I was three years old when my mother died. I have nothing to remind me of it, except that the moving about and pushing in the next room greatly frightened me. Oh mother! why did you die so soon? How different I would have been—

I? Who is this I? If it could have been different, it were not I. It was to be thus.

They put black clothes on me and my brother, and I only remember that father went with us. He said that it would be better if we did not remain with him, and that it was not well for us to grow up in solitude. He kissed us at parting. He kissed me and my brother, then he kissed me once more. It seemed as if he wished to retain my kiss for the last.

What are the memories of my childhood? A silent convent, my aunt the lady abbess, and my friend Emma. I remember this much, however: when strangers came, they would turn to me and say: "Oh, what a pretty child! what large brown eyes!" Emma told me that I

was not pretty, and that the visitors were only laughing at and mocking me; but my mirror told me that I was pretty. I frankly said so to Emma and she confessed that I was. My father came—he had been in America—and he looked at me for a long while. “Father, I am pretty, am I not?” said I to him.

“Yes, my child, you are, and much is required of one who is beautiful. Beauty is a heavy charge. Always bear yourself that others may justly feel proud of you.”

I did not know what he meant at the time, but now I understand it all.

I do not remember how the years passed by. I went back to father. Bruno, who was intended for an agriculturist, entered the army against father’s wishes. Father, absorbed by his work and his studies, lived entirely for himself, and left us to do as we pleased. He was proud of this, and often said that he did not wish to exercise his authority over us, and that he meant to allow us to develop our characters freely and without restraint. I returned to the convent, and remained there until my aunt died.

And there—forgive me, great and pure spirit!—there lay your great error. You cast aside your paternal majesty and meant to live in love alone. And we? Bruno would not, and I could not. And thus, while you were lonely, we were miserable.

Bruno went to court. He was handsome, gay and full of life. He presented me at court, also. Father had allowed me to follow my own choice, and there my troubles began. I knew that I was beautiful, and I had the courage to think differently from others. I had become the free nature which my father had meant me to be; but to what purpose?

*

When I look over what I have written, I cannot help thinking of how much one has lived and labored during a year, and how small the yield is, after all. But then flowers, too, require a long time before they blossom, and fruit ripens but slowly; many sunny days and dewy nights have helped to perfect them.

*

A rainbow! Rest and peace are intangible. They

exist nowhere except in our own imagination and in the view we take of things around us. Now I understand why the rainbow that followed the deluge was described as a token of peace. The seven colors have no real existence. They only appear to the eye that receives the broken rays at the proper angle of refraction. Rest and peace cannot be conquered by force; they are free gifts of the heaven within us—smiles and tears meeting like the rain cloud and the sunshine.

*

I am often oppressed with a fear that I shall lose what culture I possess, because of my having no one with whom I can speak in my own language, and—I hardly know how to express myself—in whom I can find my own nature reflected. And yet, that which makes man human is possessed by those about me, as much as by the most cultured. This being the case, whence this fear? and of what benefit is culture? Do I still mean to use it in the world? I do not understand myself.

Our fashionable culture cannot supplant religion, because, while religion makes all men equal, education produces inequality. But there must be a system of culture that will equalize all men, and that is the only right and true system. We are, as yet, at the threshold.

*

I have a great work before me, and am determined to succeed.

Hansei put little Peter on the white horse and let him ride a few steps. How happy the little fellow was! and how Wodan looked around at father and son! I retained the scene in my memory, and am now working at the group—Hansei, Peter, and the white foal, all together. If I only succeed! I can scarcely sleep for thinking of it.

*

The group has proved a success, although not so great a one as I had wished for. The human figures are stiff and without expression; but the horse is full of life, and every one in the house is delighted with my achievement.

Hansei wishes me to accompany him when he goes out hunting, so that I may copy stags, deer, and chamois. Those, he thinks, are the best subjects, after all.

*

I have tried to copy the animals in the forest, but did not succeed as I did with the horse. I can only hold fast to that which has no fear of me and which I, therefore, love. I shall stick to my horses and cows.

*

All the mountain summits that I see, have such strange and yet appropriate names. Who bestowed them upon them? And who accepted them? What names could we invent nowadays? The earth and language have both become rigid and unyielding. I think I once heard the same thought expressed one evening, while we were at tea with the queen.

*

The carnival is a great festival—the very realization of jollity. Peasants from the village come to visit us. They often come on Sundays, but I never heard them speak of anything but cattle, the crops, or the price of grain. I sometimes remain in the room to listen to them, for I love to hear the sound of human voices.

The stories they tell each other seem simple, but, after all, none better are told in the *salon*.

*

Why did I not live out my life in purity? I was intended for a noble and beautiful existence.

*

My white foal is running about, while I sit here modeling it. The power of giving permanent shape to impressions received by the eye is the prerogative of man alone. We have words for everything about us and can imitate all objects, and, over and above that, we have music and pure thought. What rich stores of knowledge and delight are at man's disposal.

*

We have passed three sad, sorrowful days. The grandmother was ill. The whole household was in alarm. Hansei feared the worst and did not venture to leave the farm. It was a comfort to me to find that my nursing did the grandmother so much good.

*

Hansei, proud as he is of being a great farmer, was so anxious to do something for the mother, that he chopped

the wood with which to make a fire in her room, and carried it in, himself.

*

He always told the doctor to spare no expense. Nothing was too dear, or too good for the grandmother.

The doctor explained the grandmother's illness to me, just as if I were a physician.

She often sent Uncle Peter out into the woods to me. It was still raw out there, and we soon returned.

The grandmother is well again, and is sitting in the spring sunshine.

"Yes, one must have been out of the world, to be grateful for coming back again," said she. "One who doesn't get away doesn't know what it is to come back." She had much to tell me about the deaths of her five children. "This one would have been so old, and this one so old," she kept on saying. In imagination, they had grown up with her. Then she told me of her husband's death: how he had been dragged into the lake by the driftwood, and drowned; and how Hansei had remained with them afterward. "He was a strange man," she always said of her husband, "but good-hearted."

During his sister's illness, the little pitchman was in great despair.

"She was the pride of our family," he kept on saying, as if she were already dead. But now he is the happiest of us all, and when the grandmother sat on my bench under the maple tree, for the first time, he said: "I'll get a golden seat in heaven for making that bench. The king hasn't got a finer place than that, and he can't get any one to paint bluer skies or greener woods for him than we can see from here."

*

I am quite distressed by what the little pitchman tells me. He brings me word that the man who purchases my work intends to pay me a visit. He has just received an order to furnish carved wainscotings for the palace at the king's new hunting-seat, and wishes to see me about them.

How shall I avoid meeting him?

*

The good mother has helped me out of my trouble. She received him when he came, and told him that I would see no one. She would not consent to tell a falsehood, a point on which Walpurga would have had less scruples.

I now have the working designs, and beautiful woods with which to carry them out, for I have undertaken to execute a portion of the order.

*

It matters little what manner of life one leads, so long as there is self-awakening and self-consciousness. All arts, all science, merely exist in order that our own consciousness may be acted upon and aroused by that of others. He who can do this unaided is fortunate. He who awakes of himself when it is time to go to work in the morning, has no need of a watchman to call him.

Hansei has become a juryman. Walpurga is quite proud of it, and when he took leave of us, it was with a certain air of pride and importance. The idea of appealing to the conscience of the people for the verdict of justice, is a beautiful one.

*

Hansei has returned, and had many terrible stories to tell.

It seems to me as if our lives and destinies were nothing more than shadows playing on the wall.

Hansei was deeply affected when he said to us:

"Yes, all my sins came back to me, and I felt as if I were doing penance when I pronounced judgment on others. It's nothing but good luck that prevents us from falling into sinful ways and keeps us off of the anxious bench."

*

(Sunday, May 28th.)—The grandmother is dead.

I cannot write of it. My hand seems as if paralyzed.

She kissed my eyes and said: "I kiss your eyes, and hope they may never weep again."

Two hours before her death, she said to Hansei:

"Make a sled for Burgei. She is so anxious to have one. It'll please me if you do. You needn't fear, she won't harm herself. I beg of you, do it."

"Yes, yes, grandmother!" replied Hansei, with thick voice, and deeply affected by the thought that, even then, the grandmother's only care was for Burgei's pleasure.

*

The fear of death lies heavily upon me, and yet I feel an inward sense of freedom. I have beheld a beautiful end. My hand closed her eyes in death. I had not believed that I could do it. There was a time when I could not, when I lay on the floor feeling as if I were buried far under the earth, and beside me lay my father, cold in death.

The grandmother's death has relieved me of all fear. I am able to assist Walpurga. Her lamentations are excessive. "Now I'm an orphan like you!" she cried, throwing herself on my bosom. Then she cried to the dead one: "Oh mother! how can you be so cruel as to leave me? Oh God! and there's the bird still hopping about its cage. Yes, you can jump about! but mother never will again!"

She took a cloth and covered the crossbill's cage with it, saying: "I'd like to let you fly, you dear little creature, but I can't. Mother loved you so much that I can't let you go." And then, addressing the corpse, she said: "Oh mother! can there ever be sunshine when you're not here? Yes, the clock ticks and keeps on going, and can be wound up. But, oh! the hours that will come and go without you! God forgive me for the many hours I was away from you!"

The door of the clothes-press suddenly flew open and startled Walpurga. Regain her self-command, she said: "Yes, yes; I'll wear your clothes. I'll wear them for the sake of good. No evil thought shall enter my heart, no evil word pass my lips. Help me, so that I may always be yours! Oh God! there's no one left to say 'child' to me! I remember how you said: 'So long as you can say, father, and mother, there is yet a love that bears you in its arms. It's only when the parents are gone, that one is set down on the cold ground.' I'll hold fast to all you've told me to do, and so shall my children. And, Irmgard, you remember many other wise sayings, don't you?"

Such was the burden of Walpurga's lament, and I could only reply:

"Yes, and hold fast to one thing she said: 'One may sin even in speech.' Don't give way to your grief."

*

Walpurga took down her mother's prayer-book and read the prayer for the soul of the departed.

After that, she handed me the book, and what I read there filled me with gratitude and devotion. When our feelings are most violently agitated, we cannot give definite shape to our ideas. We, too, sing melodies that have been arranged by others. Our lips repeat the words of poets who have sung and suffered for us; for the poet's heart, in truth, contains the New Jerusalem of civilization. The great gulf that separates man from the beast, the plant, or the stone, is the possession of sympathy, by means of which men are enabled to anticipate, or to follow, each other's emotions. From the beginning until now, humanity has been chanting an undying melody in which my voice, too, forms a part. An everlasting sun, of whose rays I am one, has been lighting the path from generation to generation. The silent mountains outlast the races of men and no new one is added to their number; but, from generation to generation, new watch-towers of thought arise from the soul of humanity.

*

A happy death is the greatest good. Wondrous power of religion! Over the couch of the sick, there are bell-pulls, reaching into heaven, by which the patient is enabled to draw himself up and support himself. He imagines them there, even in their absence, and, supported by faith, thinks that he is holding fast to them.

*

After the grandmother's death, a strange feeling of quiet rested on the house. It was a great comfort to Walpurga to know that there were so many people at the funeral.

"Yes, they all honored her; but they really didn't know her. You and I knew her. Do you remember, Hansei, when the potatoes were stolen from the field, and she said: 'If one only knew who stole them,' and I said:

'Mother, would you inform against them?' 'You foolish thing,' she answered, reproachfully, 'how could you think I'd mean that? What I mean is: if we only knew who the people are that stole our potatoes during the night. They must know that we have but little, ourselves; and they must be very unfortunate people, whom we ought to help as much as we can afford to.' Yes, she said that; was there ever another creature who'd think of such a thing? That's the way the saints must have been who thought so kindly of all. She had no fear of the sick, nor hatred of the wicked. Her only thought was, how much they must have suffered before they got so sick or so wicked. If I could only grow to be like her. Remind me of it all, Irmgard, when I get cross and scold. You'll help me, won't you? to become like my mother, so that, some day, my children will think of me as I do of her. Ah! if one were only always as good as one can be. Yes, she was right when she used to say: 'Wishing in the one hand and blowing into the other, amount to about the same thing.'"

*

I shall now return to my work. At such times, there is hardship and yet comfort in labor. Hansei and Walpurga are obliged to work. They cannot afford to give themselves up to grief, for too much depends on them. Be it with king or beggar, poet or peasant, the key-note of the highest emotions is always the same.

Walpurga's lament was pitched in the same key as that of Lear for Cordelia, and yet how different. To a father who loses his child, the future is dead. To a child losing a parent, the past is dead. Ah! how weak is language.

*

I was quite alarmed by something that Hansei said to-day. Has doubt entered even these simple hearts? And they do their duty in this world without a firm belief in a future state.

In his funeral sermon, the preacher had said: "Behold the trees! A few weeks ago, they were dead. But with the spring, they return to life." "The pastor oughtn't to have said that," remarked Hansei; "not that way, at

any rate. He might convert children by that, but not us. What does he mean by talking about trees in that fashion? The trees that still have life in them will get new leaves in the spring, but the dead ones won't; they'll be cut down and others will be planted in their place."

*

We all of us have a strange feeling of loneliness—a feeling that something is missing. Uncle Peter is the most inconsolable of all.

"Now I must wander about the world alone; I haven't brother or sister left. She was the pride of our family," he repeats again and again.

Heretofore, he always slept in the garret, with the servants; but now Hansei has placed the old pensioner's room at his disposal. He is quite proud of it, but often complains, saying: "Why did I have to wait so long for all this? How stupid it was of my sister and me. We might have moved in there. Could we have found a prettier place? Oh, how nicely we would have lived there, and you could have gone along with us. Oh, how stupid old age is. We don't see the good nests till the trees are bare and there's nothing more left in them. 'One gets nothing to eat, till there are no teeth to bite it with,' as my sister used to say."

He always uses the words: "As my sister used to say," when he is on the point of making a statement which he does not wish contradicted, and I imagine he really thinks his sister did say it. He inherited her closet and, before opening it, he always knocks at the door.

*

My little pitchman is a good bee-master. He knows how to take care of bees and he calls them the poor man's pasture cattle.

"Since my sister's death," said he to me to-day, "I've had nothing but bad luck with my bees. They won't have anything more to do with me."

*

I have written nothing for months. For whom are these pages? Why do I torment my mind by recording every trifling incident or passing emotion? These ques-

tions unsettled and perplexed me, but now I am calm again. For months I have done nothing but work.

It seems to me that I must soon die, and yet I feel that I am in the fulness of my strength. I am often rendered uneasy by the thought that people trifle with my supposed madness.

*

At last I feel that my rest here was never complete, and that it might have been disturbed at any moment. But now, let what will come, I shall remain.

*

A storm! To us who note the sun, the moon, and every change of weather, a storm is quite a different affair from what it is to those who only look to see what weather it is when they are idle, or have a pleasure party in prospect.

One feels as if transported back to the time of creation, as if all were chaos once more; for the voice of the Infinite is heard in the thunder, and His glory blazes forth in the lightning.

At a public gaming-table, while the thunder was pealing and the lightning flashing, and the frivolous throng had withdrawn from the game, I once saw a lady of noble birth who insisted upon going on with the game after all the others had been frightened away. The croupiers were obliged to keep at their work. This lady gives elegant entertainments, and a servant who stole a silver spoon from her, was sent to gaol. How low, to steal a spoon—! But what of her mistress?

There is, of course, one circumstance that I must not omit to mention. Every morning, before repairing to the gaming-table, she attends mass.

*

To be killed by lightning, must surely be the most beautiful death of all. On a lovely summer's day, to be suddenly struck down by the great marksman!

*

I have seen a man who moves in the polite world. He is a musician; young, good-looking, lively, and with delicate, well-cared-for hands. The storm had overtaken

him, and he passed the night in our farmhouse. While here, he told us:

"I am already blind in this eye, and my physician tells me that I shall lose the other in less than a year, and so I have determined to see the great, vast, beautiful world. He who has not seen the Alps, does not know how beautiful our earth is. And so I take it up within me once more. I fix the sun, the mountains, the forests, the meads, the streams, the lakes and, above all, the human face, in my memory. Yes, child," said he to me, "I shall preserve my memory of your face, for you are the loveliest peasant girl I have ever seen. I shall learn your face by heart, just as I have learnt poems, so that I may repeat them to myself and call them back to me when darkness and solitude close in around me."

I felt quite constrained, but he was exceedingly cheerful. Now and then, he cast a curious glance at the bandage over my brow. What may he have thought of it?

I should like to have told him that I had once, at Gunther's house, sung a song of his, but he did not mention Gunther's name.

I cannot find words to describe the impression that this handsome young man made upon me. He seemed so full of power, and without the least trace of weakly sensibility. He comes from the north, and possesses somewhat of the austere beauty of the northern races. He has breathed the salt sea air, and that is what makes him so sturdy, as they call it there. Such natures impress and arouse me; one cannot remain languid, brooding or self-complacent, while in his society.

Oh, what cannot a strong will do! How the human mind wrestles with the powers of nature and conquers them!

*

To-day, I have wept for the first time since the grandmother's death. I now feel light and free again.

The young musician has left, and I could hear him sing while on his way down the valley.

If I could still be aught to another human being—I could feel doubly as kind toward one who could neither see my brow, nor praise my beauty.

It is over—

What strange shadows does the game of life project, even unto us up here!

*

This visit has satisfied me that there is a large share of vanity still remaining in Walpurga. She could not help gradually directing the conversation to the subject, and, at last, told the stranger that she had been the crown prince's nurse, and had lived at the palace nearly a year. There is something in her that reminds me of the man who has many orders of merit, and who, like a general in citizen's dress, goes about without his medals and decorations. He modestly deprecates being addressed as "your excellency," but nevertheless enjoys it. The one year spent in the atmosphere of the court, has not been without its effect upon Walpurga.

Hansei, who felt kindly toward the stranger, and evinced great pity for him, was evidently annoyed by his wife's ostentation; but, with his usual great self-command, refrained from expressing his annoyance. But to-day, when they were going to church, Hansei asked:

"Wouldn't you like to have a ribbon around your neck and wear a picture of yourself and the crown prince, so that no one may ever forget what you once were?"

I do not think that Walpurga will ever again allude to her brilliant past.

*

The grandmother's death and funeral afforded me an opportunity to become better acquainted with the village schoolmaster. He has a tolerably fair education, but delights in making a display of it, and is fond of using big words, in order to impress the listener and to imply: "You don't quite understand me, after all." But the hearty feeling with which he entered into our grief, has raised him in my esteem, and I have frankly let him know as much. And so one day he said to me: "Your skill in wood carving is as good as a marriage portion. You can earn much money by it." I had no idea what he meant by the remark.

Last Sunday, however, I was enlightened.

He came here, dressed in a black coat and white cotton gloves, and made me a formal offer of marriage.

He could not be induced to believe that I would never marry, and he urgently repeated his offer, saying that he would only desist if I really loved another.

Walpurga fortunately came to the rescue. The good man seemed as if utterly crushed by his rejection, and went away. Why must I fill yet another heart with pain? Of my own, I do not care to speak.

*

I have not yet done with the schoolmaster's suit.

Walpurga asked me why I wished to remain so lonely. As long as I did not care to return to the great world, I might as well make this good man happy, and would be able to do much good to the children and the poor of the village. I have thus come to know myself anew. I am not made for beneficence. I am not a sister of mercy. I cannot visit the sick, unless I know and love them. I could nurse the grandmother, but no one else. I dislike peasant rooms, and the dull, heavy atmosphere of these abodes of simplicity. I am not a beneficent fairy. My senses are too easily offended. I do not care to make myself better than I am; that is, I should like to make myself better, but all one can do is to improve the good traits that already exist, and that one good trait I do not possess. I must be honest about the matter. I could find it easier to live in a convent. This confession does not make me unhappy, but melancholy. The desire to enjoy life, and to commune with myself is so strong.

*

Franz, Gundel's betrothed, had been summoned to join his regiment.

My little pitchman has just returned from the town, and brings me news that "there'll be war with the French." He tells me, too, that our business will become poor, that the people do not care to buy, and that our employer offers only half the usual price; and so I will be working for stock.—I, too, must help to bear the world's burden.

How strange it seems that I no longer know anything about my country and the age in which we live. One

consolation is left me. In such warlike times, they will not seek the lost one.

*

We are all, unconsciously, on heights from which the graves of our beloved dead are invisible. Were they ever present, there would be neither work nor song in this world.

Self-oblivion or self-knowledge—about this, everything revolves.

*

Even in hottest summer, I can always see the snow-capped mountains before me. I do not know how to express it, but they always inspire me with strange and confused emotions. I pay no regard to the date or the seasons, for I have them all at once.

In my heart there is also a spot on which rest eternal snows.

*

I have now been here between two and three years. I have formed a resolve which it will be difficult to carry out. I shall go out into the world once more. I must again behold the scenes of my past life. I have tested myself severely.

May it not be a love of adventure, that genteel yet vulgar desire to undertake what is unusual or fraught with peril. Or is it a morbid desire to wander through the world after having died, as it were?

No; far from it. What can it be? An intense longing to roam again, if it be only for a few days. I must kill the desire, lest it kill me.

Whence arises this sudden longing?

Every tool that I use while at work, burns my hand.

I must go.

I shall obey the impulse, without worrying myself with speculations as to its cause. I am subject to the rules of no order. My will is my only law. I harm no one by obeying it. I feel myself free; the world has no power over me.

I dreaded informing Walpurga of my intention. When I did so, her tone, her words, her whole manner, and the

fact that she, for the first time, called me "child," made it seem as if her mother were still speaking to me.

"Child," said she, "you're right! Go! It'll do you good. I believe that you'll come back and will stay with us, but if you don't, and another life opens up to you—your expiation has been a bitter one, far heavier than your sin."

Uncle Peter was quite happy when he learned that we were to be gone from one Sunday to the Sunday following. When I asked him whether he was curious as to where we were going, he replied:

"It's all one to me. I'd travel over the whole world with you, wherever you'd care to go; and if you were to drive me away, I'd follow you like a dog and find you again."

I shall take my journal with me, and will note down every day.

*

(By the lake.)—I find it difficult to write a word.

The threshold I am obliged to cross, in order to go out into the world, is my own gravestone.

I am equal to it.

How pleasant it was to descend toward the valley. Uncle Peter sang, and melodies suggested themselves to me, but I did not sing. Suddenly he interrupted himself and said:

"In the inns, you'll be my niece, won't you?"

"Yes."

"But you must call me 'uncle' when we're there?"

"Of course, dear uncle."

He kept nodding to himself, for the rest of the way, and was quite happy.

We reached the inn at the landing. He drank, and I drank, too, from the same glass.

"Where are you going?" asked the hostess.

"To the capital," said he, although I had not said a word to him about it. Then, in a whisper, he said to me:

"If you intend to go elsewhere, the people needn't know everything."

I let him have his own way.

I looked for the place where I had wandered at that time. There—there was the rock—and on it a cross, bearing, in golden characters, the inscription:

Here perished
IRMA, COUNTESS VON WILDENORT,
In the twenty-first year
of her life.

Traveler, pray for her and honor her memory.

I know not how long I lay there. When I revived there were several people busying themselves about me, and, among them, my little pitchman, who was quite violent in expressing his grief.

I was able to walk to the inn. My little pitchman said to the people:

"My niece isn't used to walking so far. She sits in her room all the year round. She's a wood-carver, and a mighty clever one, too."

The people were all kind to me. Guests were constantly coming and going. Some of them told the little pitchman that the beautiful monument out yonder was a great advantage to the inn; that, during the summer, it was visited by hundreds of persons; and that, every year, a nun from the convent came there, attended by another nun, and prayed at the cross.

"And who put up the monument?" asked the little pitchman.

"The brother of the unfortunate one."

"No, it was the king," said others.

The conversation often dropped off, but always began again anew.

Some said that the place must be haunted, for a beautiful creature known as Black Esther had drowned herself at the same time. She was a daughter of Zenza, who was now crazed and lived on the other side of the lake; and who could tell whether the beautiful lady—for she was very beautiful—hadn't drowned herself, too. To this the hostess angrily answered that the countess had had many gold chains and diamonds about her, and a

diamond star on her forehead; that the horse which had thrown her had been seen; that her brother had wanted to shoot the horse, but it had been bewitched and, from that day, would eat nothing and at last dropped down dead. Others said that the Countess's father had commanded her to drown herself, and that she had been an obedient child and had done so.

Thus I had a glimpse of a legend in process of formation.

"And why was the father supposed to have commanded that?" inquired the little pitchman.

"Because she loved a married man. It won't do to talk of that."

"Why won't it?" whispered a sailor. "She and the king were fond of each other, and, to save herself from doing wrong, she took her life."

How can I describe my emotions, while listening to their conversation?

Years hence, perhaps, some solitary child of man may cross the lake and sing the song of the beautiful countess with the diamond star on her brow.

I do not remember how night came on, and how I at last fell asleep. I awoke and still heard the song of the drowned countess. Its sad, deep strain had filled my dream. All that I had experienced seemed but as a vision. I looked out of my window—I looked across the lake and beheld the golden characters in the rosy dawn.

What was I to do? Should I turn back?

My little pitchman was quite happy when he saw me so fresh again. The hostess offered me a picture of the monument, saying that every visitor bought one. My uncle bargained with her, got it for half the price she had asked, and then presented it to me. I carry the picture of my gravestone with me.

I felt irresistibly drawn toward another grave—my father's. While my hand rested on the mound, an inner voice said to me: "You will be reconciled."—I expiate and atone for my sin.

How the memories awakened by these different spots agitated me. I cannot write about it—my heart is breaking! Besides this, it is filled with fear. I shall be brief.

I am unable to continue my recital. I shall never again look at these pages.

We went to the Frauensee and crossed over to the convent. Among the nuns, I saw my beloved Emma, who makes a yearly pilgrimage to my gravestone. For the first time in many years, I prayed with her. What difference does it make whether one still lives or is dead, as long as the thought—

My hand trembles while I write, but I will. . . .

I had left the convent and was returning across the lake, when the thought flashed upon me: "I expiate in freedom! That is my only pride. My will holds me as fast as the bolts of the convent gate would do, and I—I—work—"

Everything was carried out just as I had determined. I saw the whole world once more and bade it adieu.

We journeyed to the capital. The city noises and the rapid driving alarmed me.

When I again heard the rustling of a silk gown, for the first time, the sound quite affected me. I felt as if impelled to accost the first lady I met in a fashionable bonnet and veil. These people seemed to belong to me. I felt as if returning from the lower regions into sunlight.

I stopped to read the placards that were posted up at the corners of the streets. Am I still living in the same world?

There is music, singing, etc. One amuses the other. No one finds life's joys within himself.

All things in this world are related to each other. Thou hast lost the connecting link.

I was sitting in a small inn, while I looked on at the bustling life of the city.

I saw the houses here and there—and it seemed as if I beheld the ghost of a part of my life. If the people knew— There are streets here with which I am not acquainted. Men pass without a thought for each other. City folk all look ill-humored; I have not met one sunny, happy face.

*

I went to the picture-gallery. What delights the eye there feeds upon! And besides these, there is the intoxi-

cating wealth of color and the solemn stillness of the place itself. I saw my old teacher and heard him saying to a stranger: "A work of art does not derive its great historical character from the importance of the subject, or the size of the picture. What is required of the artist is that he should be filled with, and, at the same time, transport the beholder to, the scene that he attempts to depict. The same subject can be conceived in various ways, and may be executed either as a light, *genre* piece, or in the grand and more enduring historical style."

While I passed through the rooms, I felt like one intoxicated. All my old friends greeted me. They are clothed in undying colors, and have remained faithful and unchanged. The power of nature and of art lie in their truthfulness. But they do not speak; they merely exist. No—nature alone is mute; art lends its voice. It is not by the lips alone that the human mind expresses itself. I felt as if the Maria Ægyptica must suddenly turn toward me and ask: "Do you know me now?"

I grew dizzy and fearful.

While in the Raphael gallery, environed by the highest beauty earth has ever known, conceived as only the clearest eye could conceive it, I felt as if in another world.

A happy thought occurred to me: Art is the first liberator of humanity, evoking a second, joy-creating life, and—what is even a greater boon—revealing the highest realm, where every one who is called may enter. The poor son of the people says: "I and my spirit shall dwell in this lofty, this blessed abode." He reigns there eternally, surrounded by his ancestors in art. There dwells immortality; or, better still, death never enters there. The paternal mansion of free, creative art contains infinite space, and is an eternal home. Let him who has lived happily, enter there.

*

I stood before the palace. The windows of the room that I once occupied were open. My parrot was still there in its golden cage, and called out: "God keep you! God keep you!" But it does not add my name, for it has forgotten it.

*

On the table before me there lay a newspaper, the first that I had seen for years. It was long before I could summon resolution to read it, but I did so at last and read as follows:

"His majesty the king has departed for the sea baths, where he will remain for six weeks. Prime minister Von Bronnen," (Von Bronnen minister!) "Count Wildenort, master of the horse," (my brother!) "and privy councilor Sixtus, the king's physician, are of his suite."

How much these few lines conveyed to me! There was no need of my reading any further. Yet there was another paragraph, saying:

"Her majesty the queen, accompanied by his royal highness the crown prince, has removed to the summer palace."

*

I walked about the city and looked into the shop windows and at the many objects which I no longer require. In one of the windows, I found some of my carvings on exhibition. "That's our work!" exclaimed the little pitchman, who boldly went into the shop and inquired as to the price, and also asked by whom they had been done. The price named was a high one, and the merchant added: "These works of art"—yes, he spoke of them as works of art—"are made by a half-crazy peasant girl, who lives in the Highlands."

I looked at my little pitchman. He was terribly afraid. His glance seemed to implore me not to lose my senses while away from home. His fear was not without good grounds, for, in spite of my self-control, my faithful guide must have found much that was strange in my behavior.

I bought several small plaster casts of gems of Greek art; and now I have types of undying beauty ever with me. It required clever management to effect such unusual purchases, and I only ventured to attempt it during the twilight hour.

I saw many familiar faces, but always quickly averted mine. I would so gladly have spoken to Mademoiselle Kramer. She has become quite aged. She was carrying a book with the yellow label of the circulating library. How many thousands of books the dear old woman must

have read! She reads book after book, just as men smoke cigars.

I went to Gunther's house. The courtyard gate was open. There is now a factory there, and the lovely trees have all been felled.

On the head of the figure of Victory at the arsenal, there sat a pigeon with glossy plumage— Although without eye-glasses, I could see the figure quite distinctly.

*

The evening afforded me pure delight—the purest I ever knew, or, as I firmly believe, ever will know.

Mozart's "Magic Flute" was performed at the theater.

I went there with my little pitchman. We sat in the uppermost tier. I saw no one, although the crowded house must have contained many whom I knew. All my senses were held captive by music's magic spell.

It is past midnight. My little pitchman and I are stopping at a teamster's inn. I cannot rest until I put my feelings into words.

Mozart's "Magic Flute" is one of those immortal creations that dwell in purest ether, in a region beyond the passions and struggles of mankind. I have often heard the text objected to as puerile, but, at that height, all action, all understanding, all personages, all surroundings, must needs be allegorical. All that is hard and narrow is cast aside, and man becomes a bird, his life pure and natural, full of love and wisdom. The childlike or childish character of the text is singularly true to nature. It is only the *blasé* who can find it dull and insipid.

It is Mozart's last dramatic work, and in it he appears at his best, in all the fullness of his genius, as if already transfigured. His various figures pass before him in review, created anew, as it were; less fixed and individualized, but all the more pure and ethereal. Using the word in its best sense, there is something supernatural in the way in which he has here gathered and combined the chords that else were scattered, into one harmonious whole.

The opening chorus of priests is the march of humanity, and the "O Isis!" is full of the sunshine of blissful peace. This is the fabled paradise—a life above this, in

the free ether, beyond the reach of storm or tempest; a region to which music alone can transport us.

For hours, I felt as if thus transported, and know not how I descended again. Thoughts without number hover about me. This music breathes a spirit of noble, self-conscious repose, and is free from all oppressed humility. It is a life that can never fade; nay, it is the odor of ripened fruit.

This last work of Mozart's has a companion piece in Lessing's last work: "Nathan the Wise." In both of them the soul wings its flight far beyond the disjointed, struggling world and dwells in the pure region beyond, where peace and piety have become actual existences, and where the vexations of narrow, circumscribed, finite humanity provoke but a smile. The great treasure of humanity is not buried in the past; it must be dug out, fashioned and created from the future.

"Nathan" and the "Magic Flute" abound with precious gems. They prove that happiness is not an illusion, but they speak in a language unintelligible to him who does not bear within himself a sense of things above this life.

To have lived such hours is life eternal.

The song of the three boys is full of divine bliss. If the angels in Raphael's Sistine Madonna were to sing, such would be their melodies, and in this register would their voices move.

I would like to hear such sounds at my dying hour, for that would be an ecstatic death.

If such ecstasy could only continue without interruption.

After the opera was over, I sat in the park for a long time. All was dark and silent.

Filled with this music, I would gladly fly back to my forest solitude, have nothing more to do with the world, and silently pass away. After these, no other tones should fall upon my ear and disturb me.

But I was obliged to return to the world.

And here I sit, late at night, the whole world resting in sleep and self-oblivion, while I am awake in self-oblivion.

O ye eternal spirits! Could one but be with you and

utter a word, a sound, that should pass into infinity! In yonder gallery, eyes that never close, look down upon the coming and departing generations. And here there are undying harmonies and imperishable words.

Oh ye blessed spirits, ye who through art create a second world! The world confuses and perplexes us, but ye make everything clear as the light of day. Ye are the blessed genii who ever offer mankind the wine of life in the golden chalice which, though millions drink from it, is never emptied.

It is with deep pain that I depart from the realm of color and that of sound. This, and this only, is indeed a deprivation.

*

And now for the last halting-place.

We wandered on in the direction of the summer palace. We walked up and down before the park railing. Up by the chapel, and under the weeping ash, I could see the court ladies sitting on the ornamented chairs and busy with their embroidery. Ah, there is many a one there, no better than I am, and yet she jests and laughs, is happy and respected. Aye, there lies the misery. We are constantly blunting our moral sense and saying to ourselves: "Look about you; others are no better than you are."

Presently they all arose and bowed profoundly. The gates were opened and the queen drove out, the prince sitting beside her. She looked at me and the little pitchman, and greeted us. My eyes failed me.

I know not. Did I see aright? The queen looked cheerful.

The prince has become a fine boy. He has kept the promise of his infancy.

My little pitchman conversed with a stone-breaker, who was working on the road. He was loud in his praises of the queen and her only child, the crown prince. So she has only one child—

I was so weary that I was obliged to rest by the wayside. In former days, I had so often proudly passed by the spot where I was now sitting. No matter! It is well that it is so. The little pitchman was delighted when I told him that our path now lay homeward. He must

have felt quite alarmed about me, and must have thought to himself: "The folks who say that you're not quite right, were not so far out after all."

*

Those who see me not, think me dead; those who do see me, think me crazed.

I had determined that, in case of discovery, I would tell all to the king and queen, and, after that, quietly return to my retreat.

It is better thus.

*

We returned home. When I reached the foot of the mountain on which we live, and had begun to ascend it, I asked myself: "Is this your home?" And yet, absence makes it seem like a new home. The life I lead here is a real life.

Since I have noted down this thought, I feel as if a weight were lifted from my heart. While writing, I often feel as giddy as if standing on the edge of a precipice; but I shall remain firm. I will not look at these pages again. But now work begins once more, and my head will cease to be filled with thoughts of repentance. The next minute is ours; the passing moment is scarcely so; and the past one not at all.

There is much work awaiting me. I am glad that it is so. Walpurga and the children are quite happy to have me with them again.

During my absence, Walpurga had my room painted a pale red. It is in wretched taste, and yet I must needs show myself grateful. She thought that I would not return.

These people constitute my whole world, and yet I could leave them any minute. Will it be thus when I, too, leave the world?

*

Courageously to forego the world—I think I have read the expression somewhere; but now I understand it. I feel it within myself and am carrying it out; not timidly, not sadly,—but courageously.

*

I am no longer sad. The calm satisfaction with which I resign the world emancipates me.

When I look at life, I ask myself: "Why all these struggles and all these barriers, until we come to the last barrier of all, unto death itself?" The great heroes of history and my little pitchman—not one of them had the odds of fortune in his favor. No destiny is completely and purely fulfilled.

Old Jochem said his prayers every day, and would often pass whole hours thus employed; yet he would curse mankind and his own fate. And I have known ladies of quality, who, after listening in rapt ecstasy to the music of Beethoven, would dispute and wrangle after the most vulgar fashion.

"Courageously to forego." The words are ever haunting me. Thanks for this precept, kind spirit, whoever thou mayst be! To live out the day and not allow it to be darkened by the knowledge that night must come, to forego with courage—that is the sum of all.

I never would have believed that I could live without joy, without pleasures; but now I see that I can. Joy and pleasure are not the conditions upon which my life is based.

We have it in our power to attune the mind to cheerfulness; that is, to calmness and clearness.

*

How many years was it that Hermione, of the "Winter's Tale," remained hidden? I have quite forgotten.

*

I am constantly reminded, while at work, of various passages, of the solos, the great choruses, and even the instrumental accompaniments, in Mozart's "Magic Flute." They fill the silent air with their sounds, and bear me aloft.

Above all, the appeal, "Be steadfast!" with the three short notes, d, e, d, and the trumpet-blast that follows, is ever sounding in my ears like some spiritual watchword. The highest truths should be conveyed by music alone, and would thus become more forcible and enduring. Be steadfast—

I am again trying to solve the enigma of life.

Man may not do all that he can, or to which he feels impelled. Since he is human, he must recognize the limit of his rights before he reaches the limit of his powers.

At court they often discussed the saying: "Right before might." I have melted down the phrase in the alembic of thought. I have coined it anew.

How beautiful is the legend of paradise! The first human pair were placed there; as far as their powers went, everything, with a single exception, was permitted to them—and the fruit tempted them. But there is no paradise. The beast alone possesses what may be termed paradise. It is free to do whatever it can. As long, however, as there is a prohibition which man, as a moral being, must know, there can be no paradise, for perfect freedom is at an end.

What I mean is this: self-consciousness is gained by overstepping the barrier. It is eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. From that moment, man's joys are no longer provided for him. He must create them, either from within himself or from his surroundings. Now he begins to wrestle with nature, and his life becomes one of deeds. Work, whether directed to self-perfection or intended to benefit the world, is a second creation.

My every thought seems as if it were an inarticulate, stammering attempt to express the words of knowledge.

The little world around me and the so-called great world that still lives in my memory, now seem to me as if illumined and rendered transparent by the golden sunlight.

To perceive the barriers, and thus recognize the necessity of law, is liberty. I am free at last.

*

I did well in going out into the world again. Or do I merely think so because I feel that I have done right? I am a freer being now. I have ceased to be the poor soul that longed to return to the world. My life is no longer a hell. I could now return to the world without fear. Now that I can courageously forego it, I do not feel the privation. Oh, how presumptuous we are to imagine that others need us! I, too, no longer need any one.

*

The telegraph wires are being put up between here and my forest view. The busy doings of the great world are now to pass by me. I can see men on the ladders, fastening the wires to the high poles.

*

Walpurga tells me that my voice is quite hoarse, but I feel quite well. Perhaps it is because I speak so little, sometimes passing whole days without uttering a word.

The cool, pure breezes that I inhale every morning are like a refreshing draught, and the blue of the sky is far deeper up here.

*

Gunther once told me that I am of an unrhythmic temperament. He was in the right. If I were not, I would now express my deepest thoughts in melodious words. I feel so happy, so free, that my thoughts could find proper expression in poetry alone.

*

Although Hansei has now been in possession for a long while, he seems grateful for everything. It makes him happy to know that he is able to buy fine cows and pretty bells for them, and this gratitude for his good fortune lends an inner tenderness to his rough exterior.

*

(August 28th.)—After long, sunless days of deathlike torpor, the sky is bright and clear again. The snowy peaks, the green hills and the valleys are bathed in sunshine. I feel as if I must fly away and soar through space; but I remain here and work; for, as my work was faithful to me in dark days, so shall I remain faithful to it in bright ones. I shall only wander forth when evening comes and work is at an end. This is Goethe's birthday. I think Goethe would have been friendly toward me, if I had lived in his time and near him.

It is pleasant, after all, that we know the hour of his birth. It was at noon. I write these lines during the very hour, and my thoughts are of him.

What would he have counseled me to do with my lost life?

Is it a lost life?—It is not.

*

Franz has returned from the target-shooting and was the hero of the occasion. What shouts of joy and triumph! He gained the first prize, a fine rifle. The target, riddled with bullets, is displayed before our house.

*

A falling leaf in autumn—how many bright summer days and mild nights were required to perfect it? What was it while it hung on the tree? What is it now, when it falls to the ground?

And what is the result of a whole human life, when summed up in a few sentences?

*

How many feet is our farm above the level of the sea? I do not know, and Hansei would smile to think of one's asking such a question. We perform our duty on the little spot of earth on which we dwell. Its effect flows out into the great sea of humanity and of history, without any interference of ours. The brook goes on in its course, driving the mill-wheels, irrigating the meadows, and is at last swallowed up in the ocean, whence come the clouds and storms that again feed the brook.

*

In spite of all that I grew up to, all that, in a course of years, I have practiced, acted, or thought, I cannot help regarding myself as a block of wood—even now, I know not what will become of me, or who will hew me into shape.

I have a beautiful task on hand—a piece of work that will remain and be a constant pleasure to me—work for our own house.

When the additions were made to the dwelling, I succeeded, with the assistance of the carpenter, in giving greater symmetry to the dwelling itself. The piazza running round the house received a more open roof, and the balustrade a more pleasing form.

Hansei has often said that the forest clearing would make a beautiful meadow. Yesterday he came home and said:

"I have it! I'm having the trees on the hillside felled, and have left four fine trunks standing. They form a square and I'll have a hut built there, and then we'll

have a mountain meadow of our own. The farm can't thrive without one. It's far up, to be sure—about two hours' walk; but we can see the clearing from here."

"And just think of it," said Hansei, who was delighted with his plan, "where the trees have been cut down in front, you can see ever so far, way off to the lake where we used to live. To be sure, it's nothing more than a little sparkling spot of blue, but it looks at one so kindly, just like a faithful eye from home, or like one who has known you from childhood. It was beautiful at our home, but it's more beautiful here; so don't let us sin by being ungrateful."

I have made the drawing for the shepherd's hut. My little pitchman is quite clever in cutting everything. We are working at our Noah's ark, and are as merry as apprentices.

I am also carving a horse's head in life size, for the gable of the roof.

*

Hansei and I have just returned from where the new shepherd's hut is being built.

After the invigorating mountain ascent of to-day, I feel as if I had been present at the dawning of creation; a new road, a new dwelling, and a spot where human being had never been before. I feel as if experience had nothing more in store for me; as if all earthly burdens had fallen from me.

*

When, after a day of great exertion and mountain climbing, one awakes on the following morning, the fatigue has passed away. One feels refreshed and invigorated, and satisfied with the test to which he has subjected himself; for it has proved his power of endurance and his ability to impose tasks upon himself. For a while, I had left my past and possessed nothing but myself. Now that I have returned to familiar scenes, they welcome me again. I can easily realize the calm peacefulness of those who thus picture to themselves the awakening to the eternal life.

*

The shepherd's hut is empty. The walls are bare,

except where the picture of our Saviour hangs in the corner, waiting for the beings who are to come there. It is, and ever will remain, a blessing that men can thus bear with them, to desert wastes and lonely heights, the image of pure and perfect man. It is this which enables a more perfect civilization and a great history to take possession of the modern world.

If only the pure knowledge of the pure spirit always went with it.

*

(October.)—Now that winter approaches, my thoughts are always of the lonely shepherd's hut upon the mountain. I am always there in my dreams, alone and undergoing strange experiences. I think I must move up there next spring. I feel that life will be incomplete until I have spent a whole summer with plants and beasts, with mountain and brook, with the sun, the moon and the stars.

Art thou still dissatisfied, insatiate heart, always longing for something else? What can it be? I must and will have rest!

*

He who needs nothing but himself to be happy, is happy indeed.

*

Here, once again, I am like the first human being that walked the earth.

Man, of himself, is pure and unsullied, and out of him flows the world. There lies the secret which I shall not name.

*

It makes me happy to think that I am to go still higher; further up the mountain, where it is even quieter and more lonely than here. I feel as if something were calling me there. It is neither a voice nor a sound. I know not what it is, and yet it calls me, draws me, allures me, with its: "Come! come!"—Yes, I am coming!

*

I know that I am not dying. I would sooner doubt that I am living. The world is no longer an enigma to me.

*

From my mountain height I look down on those I have wronged. They are my father, my queen, and, worst of all, myself!

*

Of all things in this world, untruth is the surest to avenge itself. When I wrote to the king, from the convent, I vaunted my truthfulness and yet, at the same time, I was thoroughly untruthful. I aimed at bringing about an act of freedom and yet, at heart, my only desire was to write to him and impress him by my love of liberty. I felt proud of my opposition to popular opinion, and hoped thus to show him that I was his strong friend. He declined my proffered advice, and yet it was I who again opened the convents.

Falsehood avenges itself.

Purity and freedom can only exist where there is perfect truthfulness.

*

If I could only find words to express the delight with which to-day's sunset filled me. It is night, and as surely as the sun shone on my face, so surely does a ray of sunlight shine within me. I am a ray of eternity. Compared with it, what are days or years? What is a whole human life?

*

I never rightly knew why I was always dissatisfied, and yearning for the next hour, the next day, the next year, hoping that it would bring me that which I could not find in the present. It was not love, for love does not satisfy. I desired to live in the passing moment, but could not. It always seemed as if something were waiting for me without the door, and calling me. What could it have been?

I know now; it was a desire to be at one with myself, to understand myself. Myself in the world, and the world in me.

*

The vain man is the loneliest of human beings. He is constantly longing to be seen, understood, acknowledged, admired and loved.

I could say much on the subject, for I, too, was once

vain. It was only in actual solitude that I conquered the loneliness of vanity. It is enough for me that I exist.

How far removed this is from all that is mere show.

*

Now I understand my father's last act. He did not mean to punish me. His only desire was to arouse me, to lead me to self-consciousness, to the knowledge that, teaching us to become different from what we are, saves us.

*

I understand the inscription in my father's library: "When I am alone, then am I least alone."

Yes; when alone, one can more perfectly lose himself in the life universal. I have lived and have come to know the truth. I can now die.

*

He who is at one with himself, possesses all.

*

What will people say?—These few words represent the world's tyranny, the power that perverts our nature and temperaments, and account for our mental obliquity of vision. These four words rule everywhere. Walpurga is swayed by them, while Hansei has quite a different standard, the only true one. Without knowing it, he acts just as Gunther would have done.

Man's first and only duty is to preserve his peace of mind. He should be utterly indifferent as to "what the people will say." That question makes the mind homeless. Do right and fear naught! Rest assured that with all your consideration for the world, you can never satisfy it. But if you will go on in your own way, indifferent to the praise or blame of others, you have conquered the world, and it cheerfully subjects itself to you. As long as you care for "what the people will say," so long are you the slave of others.

*

I believe that I know what I have done. I have no compassion for myself. This is my full confession.

I have sinned—not against nature, but against the world's rules. Is that sin? Look at the tall pines in yonder forest. The higher the tree grows, the more do the lower branches die away, and thus the tree in the

thick forest is protected and sheltered by its fellows, but can, nevertheless, not perfect itself in all directions.

I desired to lead a full and complete life and yet to be in the forest, to be in the world and yet in society. But he who means to live thus, must remain in solitude. As soon as we become members of society, we cease to be mere creatures of nature. Nature and morality have equal rights and must form a compact with each other, and where there are two powers with equal rights, there must be mutual concessions.

Herein lies my sin.

He who desires to live a life of nature alone, must withdraw himself from the protection of morality. I did not fully desire either the one or the other ; hence I was crushed and shattered.

My father's last action was right. He avenged the moral law, which is just as human as the law of nature. The animal world knows neither father nor mother, so soon as the young is able to take care of itself. The human world does know them and must hold them sacred.

I see it all quite clearly. My sufferings and my expiation are deserved. I was a thief! I stole the highest treasures of all: confidence, love, honor, respect, splendor.

How noble and exalted the tender souls appear to themselves when a poor rogue is sent to jail for having committed a theft! But what are all possessions which can be carried away, when compared with those that are intangible!

Those who are summoned to the bar of justice are not always the basest of mankind.

I acknowledge my sin, and my repentance is sincere.

My fatal sin, the sin for which I now atone, was that I dissembled, that I denied and extenuated that which I represented to myself as a natural right. Against the queen, I have sinned worst of all. To me, she represents that moral order which I violated and yet wished to enjoy.

To you, O queen, to you—lovely, good, and deeply injured one—do I confess all this!

If I die before you—and I hope that I may—these pages are to be given to you.

We cannot take nature for our only guide. He who follows its law has no share, no inheritance in the world of history. He knows nothing of the beings who lived before him, and who helped to make the world what it is. With him, the world is barren; with him, it dies. He who follows naught but nature's law and persuades himself that he is thus doing right, denies humanity and, at the same time, denies that the human race has a history which is not represented by himself alone, but has existed before him and now exists without him. In spite of gloss and varnish, he who denies humanity is but a savage. He stands without the pale of civilization. All that he does, or wears, or enjoys, of the fruits of culture, is but a theft. He should sing no song but that which is natural to him, like the bird which brings its plumage and its song into the world with it, and has no special garb or tones; for there all is species, all is the law of nature.

In this alone lies the truth.

*

Above all right and all duty, is love, leading lover and beloved to the pure unfolding of their natures.

Woe to those who desecrate its divine mission!

*

My father's fate is also clear to me, now. He wished to live for and perfect himself; and yet he had children whose love and affection he claimed. His death was one of the terrible consequences of the life he had led. That, however, does not make me innocent, and he dealt justly toward me.

I have no desire to offer excuses for anything I have done. I mean to be perfectly truthful. That is my only happiness, my only pride.

*

Your worth depends upon what you are; not upon what you have.

*

I have found the center about which my mind revolves.

*

During the last few days, it has seemed to me as if my father's terrible punishment had never been executed, as

if it were only the guilty presentiment of my own imagination.

What has induced this sudden thought that will not leave me?

I know! I know! Whatever may have happened is now atoned for! There can be a renewed life, a deliverance achieved by ourselves, and I feel that this has been vouchsafed me. I am once more free! I can return to the world and remove the bandage from my brow!

To the world! What is the world? I have it within me. I am in the world, and the world is in me. I am!

*

I have sung again for the first time. Oh, how much good it did me! No one heard me but myself.

No bird sings for itself; it sings for its mate. Man alone can sing and think for himself. He alone possesses self-consciousness.

*

The calm of morn, which is always so dear to me, now seems to last during the whole day.

*

Yonder brook often seems to roar much more loudly than at other times. It is because a sudden wind catches it and bears the sound-waves toward me.

*

(At work.)—When the material on which we work is hard and unyielding, we learn to make a virtue of necessity. I often chance upon changes in the fiber or grain which necessitate new beauties or deformities. I often bring out touches which I did not intend, and those that I did intend become quite different from what I had expected, just because the wood is master, as well as my hand. Varnish, blessed friend in need, covers both beauties and defects.

*

We create nothing. We merely shape and discover that which already exists and which, without our assistance, cannot release itself from chaos.

Oh, I feel as if I at last understand the whole world and all of art and work. I feel that my longings for the infinite are satisfied.

I now know the cause of the clashing between our lofty thoughts and our lives of petty detail.

Hansei, Walpurga, the king, the queen, Gunther, Emma—what are they all? Mere drops in the ocean of humanity. When I think of myself as a part of the whole, I forget them all. That destroys love for individuals; desire and enjoyment cease, and, with them, passion and heartache.

And what am I? What still remains to me? We can conceive the great and complete whole, while our love can only be for the individual, for that which is nearest to us. And the nearest of all is God, the great idea of universal law.

*

Walpurga is quite anxious about me. She often comes to me, and it seems as if she wished to say something. She looks at me so strangely, and yet says nothing. She tells me, again and again, how lovely it will be at the shepherd's hut, and how quiet and happy I will be up there. She wishes the mountains were already cleared of snow. She would like me to be away from here, and says that I would soon become strong. And yet I do not feel ill, but she always says: "You shine so!"

I feel as if I had settled my accounts with the world. I am perfectly calm, and it may be that this feeling casts its radiance about me. I could no longer fear the world. I could again live among human beings, for I feel myself free. Nothing more can wound me.

*

I feel a desire for more perfect solitude. Shall I find greater seclusion, profounder silence, up there? It seems as if I were ever hearing the words, "lonely as death." (*mutterseelenallein.*) Oh, thou blessed, German tongue! What a blessing it is that, without effort, I bear the rich stores of my mother-tongue within me, and that, when thoughts gush forth from every nook and cranny of the brain, I have some word-vessel at command with which to receive the idea. It seems to me as if I must be always speaking and writing and rejoicing because of this possession.

I must break off. Our most mysterious, our deepest

thoughts, are like the bird on the bough. He sings, but as soon as he sees an eye watching him, he flies away.

*

I can now accurately tell the season of the year and, often, the hour of the day by the way in which the first sunbeams fall into my room and on my workbench in the morning. My chisel hangs before me on the wall, and is my index.

*

The drizzling, spring showers now fall on the trees—and thus it is with me. It seems as if there were a new delight in store for me. What can it be? I shall patiently wait!

*

A strange feeling comes over me, as if I were lifted up from the chair on which I am sitting, and were flying, I know not whither!

What is it? I feel as if dwelling in eternity.

Everything seems flying toward me; the sunlight and the sunshine, the rustling of the forests and the forest breezes, beings of all ages and of all kinds—all seem beautiful and rendered transparent by the sun's glow.

I am!

I am in God!

If I could only die now and be wafted through this joy to dissolution and redemption!

But I will live on until my hour comes.

Come, thou dark hour, whenever thou wilt! To me, thou art light!

I feel that there is light within me. O Eternal Spirit of the universe, I am one with thee!

I was dead, and I live—I shall die and yet live.

Everything has been forgiven and blotted out.—There was dust on my wings.—I soar aloft into the sun and into infinite space. I shall die singing from the fullness of my soul. Shall I sing!

Enough.

*

I know that I shall again be gloomy and depressed and drag along a weary existence, but I have once soared into infinity and have felt a ray of eternity within me. That

I shall never lose again. I should like to go to a convent, to some quiet, cloistered cell, where I might know nothing of the world, and could live on within myself until death shall call me. But it is not to be. I am destined to live on in freedom and to labor; to live with my fellow-beings and to work for them.

The results of my handiwork and of my powers of imagination, belong to you; but what I am within myself, is mine alone.

*

I have taken leave of everything here; of my quiet room, of my summer bench; for I know not whether I shall ever return. And if I do, who knows but what everything may have become strange to me?

*

(Last page written in pencil.)—It is my wish that when I am dead, I may be wrapped in a simple, linen cloth, placed in a rough, unplanned coffin, and buried under the apple-tree, on the road that leads to my paternal mansion. I desire that my brother and other relatives may be apprised of my death at once, and that they shall not disturb my grave by the wayside.

No stone, no name, is to mark my grave.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

GUNTHER received his dismissal. Sated with his experience of the world, he withdrew from its distracting and bustling turmoil. Old and endearing associations made it no easy matter for his family to transfer their affections to a new home—and yet the change was brought about without impairing their unity of feeling and affection. Those two pure gods, love and science, followed Gunther beyond the mountains, and his heart was free from rancor.

Their home circle now was once more perfect. As if returning from a journey around the world, Gunther again found himself at the starting-point—for he knew that he and his would find a free and self-dependent life the source of the most ennobling and beautiful influences.

Naturally enough, they missed the presence of a cultured circle, its refining influences and the opportunity it affords for an interchange of ideas. But he felt that they would stand the test, and would prove that they could give up all this without greatly missing it. Immediately after his dismissal, he received a most flattering offer of a professorship at one of the great universities. He declined the proffered position. It had been a long cherished idea of his, to improve his knowledge of certain branches of science and to complete certain scientific labors, of which he had thus far merely sketched the outlines. It often grieved him to think that he might quit the world, incomplete in himself and leaving much unfinished work behind him. Life at court, with its constant changes and interruptions, renders connected thought impossible. To mount guard every morning, in full

armor; to be ready, at a moment's call, to discuss even the most important subject, in a light conversational manner:—such a life, if persisted in for a number of years, will, in spite of every effort to the contrary, tend to injure one's inner nature.

Fortunately for Gunther, scientific studies and home influences always lent him new vigor. But he was often alarmed lest he should fritter away his life and gradually lose his individuality. To a certain extent, he was perfectly willing to be uniformed; he even admitted that it was both necessary and pleasing, since it represented a remnant of that mental and political discipline which combines and utilizes individuals who were otherwise incongruous and scattered. But, at the same time, Gunther endeavored to prevent any change in himself. He would often, and with special stress, remark that he who suffers any of his essential traits to be thus changed has been subdued and killed by the world, and has ceased to exist as himself.

When, with each succeeding day, he presented himself at court, he came, as it were, from a strange and distant sphere. And it was this which accounted for the severe and almost unbending manner, so often observed in him. He was, nevertheless, forbearing toward the superficiality and the mere desire to please, which he encountered at court, for he well knew that where strength of character or depth of culture do not feed the spring of life, there must needs be some provision for every passing hour, and also an inevitable tendency to make all life center about the daily affairs of a small and exclusive circle.

Gunther's so-called inflexibility also lay in the fact that he never misplaced the center of gravity, and thus, when the prop seemed withdrawn, he could yet stand his ground firmly and had no need to seek for strength from without. And now, when the sudden, but by no means unexpected, rupture took place, it was easy enough to lay aside the privy councilor and remain the doctor. He had soon mastered every trace of ill-feeling produced by his great and sudden fall. He regretted to leave his many friends at the capital and the queen especially. He knew that he could still have been of great benefit to her; "but

then," said he to himself, "it will be far better for her to seek and gain strength from herself, and without the aid of others."

Thus Gunther left the capital, and, in doing so, realized a life-long wish to return to his native town.

He had almost attained his seventieth year, and looked upon the remnant of life yet accorded him as a peaceful evening of rest—the reward of a well-spent manhood. He desired, as far as possible, to close his accounts with knowledge, in order that night should not overtake him, while so much was as yet incomplete.

Some years ago, Gunther had built a modest house in his native town, and had intended it as a summer retreat for his family, while his children were still young. And now this house was to serve as a resting-place for the remainder of his life. Madame Gunther and the children had cheerfully taken leave of their old associations. They bade farewell to friends who were near and dear to them. But their life lay in their home, and this home, with all its visible and invisible treasures, accompanied them to their new abode.

Gunther's sister was the only relative he possessed in the little Highland town. She was an active, bustling hostess. The father, who had been a country physician, died while Gunther was studying at the university. Wilhelm had ever been the idol of the family, and the sister—as well as the mother, up to the time of her death—had always regarded him as a sort of daring and successful navigator. With the assistance of her grown-up sons and daughters, the sister had put their new dwelling to rights. Gunther's charming home soon became the center of attraction in the little town, and was, in its way, almost as important as the royal palace at the capital.

Esteem and gratitude were the invisible sentries who guarded the house. The respectful manner in which visitors entered it proved that naught but good-breeding dare cross that threshold.

Gunther's sister, the hostess of the Rose, reaped new honors, and when, within a short time of each other, her two sons and one daughter became betrothed, it was deemed an inestimable piece of good fortune to become

connected with the family of the privy councilor. Every stranger who visited the town was speedily informed of this eminent citizen and of his charming household.

A peaceful atmosphere reigned in Gunther's house. It seemed a very temple of science and beauty. It was difficult to decide whether it was more delightful in summer or in winter. In summer there was, of course, less chance to know how familiar its inmates were with all that tends to adorn home life. If the gardens in the neighborhood were less neatly arranged, their seats less comfortable and cozy, the points from which views could be obtained less artistically chosen—their hedges and trees were of just as bright a green and the prospect just as fine. But in winter, when man adorns his home, and when he has naught about him but the little world which he has himself shaped and arranged, then and then only, can we see what a lovely home may be created by those whose light and warmth are derived from themselves.

If a half-frozen traveler, descending from the snowy mountains, had been at once conducted to Gunther's home, he would have imagined that he had landed upon an oasis of civilization.

Salve! was the inscription over the doorway. Architecturally, the building was an improvement on the usual country-house. The roof projected considerably, for it was necessary to prevent the snow from piling itself before the windows; but this projecting roof was decorated with tasteful carvings. The steps were covered with winter plants, the walls were decorated with plaster copies from the Parthenon, the rooms were neatly arranged, and every piece of furniture properly placed. There were also finely engraved copies of the choicest paintings, and, alternating with them, statuettes of the great men of all ages. On every hand, there were marble, plaster, or bronze works of art which had been sent to the celebrated physician by his admirers, and principally by those of the fair sex. Two stuffed bears, which had been sent to him by a Russian princess and served as foot-stools, had been quite the talk of the town.

The rooms were never excessively warm. The temperature was a comfortable one, in which men and plants

could thrive. Large leaf-plants were placed at the windows and in the corners of the room. There was also a marble bust of Gunther, made by Irma's teacher, years ago. It was standing on a console and was surrounded by flowers.

Gunther was famous as a ladies' doctor, and was thus in correspondence with many ladies of the higher classes. During the summer, some of these would occasionally visit the little town, for the sake of consulting him, and would sometimes prolong their stay beyond the time intended. The hostess of the Rose had fitted up two houses adjoining her own, and had put them in charge of two of her children, subject, of course, to her own careful supervision. And here the invalid visitors dwelt, while under treatment. Gunther gave a large share of his practice to a young physician who had married the second daughter of his sister, but retained the general superintendence in his own hands.

The little town blessed its distinguished and beneficent citizen. The best of everything always found its way to Gunther's house. Choice fish, the best game, early vegetables, and the finest fruit were brought there, and Madame Gunther was at some trouble to prevent people from overstocking the house. Even their servants were held in honor. Since they moved into the town, they had not once changed their domestics, who were constantly endeavoring to make themselves more useful and obliging. Even the dog and the mule which Gunther had procured for his mountain trips, were regarded with pleasure by the citizens.

CHAPTER II.

IT was in the early spring.

Madame Gunther and her two daughters were sitting by the window and working. A light-haired little girl, nearly five years old, was playing on the floor, and the three ladies often regarded it with affectionate glances. Aunt Paula seemed to be her favorite, and most of the child's questions were addressed to her.

Change of residence had made no alteration in Madame

Gunther. She was still as dignified and refined as of yore, and, as her friends at the capital had been wont to say, every dress she wore seemed as if she had put it on for the first time.

The professor's widow had grown somewhat stouter, and Paula, who had grown in height, was the youthful image of her mother.

"May I call grandfather now?" asked little Cornelia, who noticed that the round table in the center of the room had been set for the second breakfast.

"Not yet, but right soon," replied Paula.

Gunther was still in his working-room. It was furnished simply, provided with a small but choice library, and embellished with appropriate bronzes. Gunther's dress, while at his work-table, was as scrupulously neat as if he expected to be summoned to court at any moment. He invariably rose at five o'clock, all the year round, and had done a full day's work when others were just commencing the day. It was only in unavoidable and exceptional cases that he allowed himself to be disturbed during the morning.

He wrote a great deal. It was rumored at the capital that he was engaged in preparing his memoirs, and he might, had he cared to do so, have had much to tell; for who was so familiar as he with the secret history of the last and the present government? But he felt it his duty to write of other matters. He endeavored to construct a science of life, using the combined results of the study of nature and practical knowledge of the world, as a basis. A slight glow would mantle his cheeks, and his eyes would involuntarily gaze into the far distance, when some difficult problem, which had hitherto eluded his grasp, became clear to his mental vision. At such moments, he would, as if impelled by an inner force, rise from his seat, and his chest would heave with emotion, at the thought that he was laying bare the secret springs of character and habit, with as much indifference to side considerations as if he were engaged on a physiological preparation.

The view from Gunther's windows, each of which consisted of a single plate of glass, extended to the distant

mountains. Far up the heights, there was a small clearing, scarcely visible to the naked eye. Naught was noticeable but a small break in the woods, and, although it was known that the freehold lay there, its broad acres were out of sight. Irma had been sitting up there, working and brooding over her troubles, for nearly four years, while Gunther, in the mean while, had been sitting at his oaken table, writing his "Contributions to the Science of Life." His glance often rested on the distant heights, but he little dreamt that, while he was calmly gathering the fruits of his experience, another soul up there was spending its strength in the vain endeavor to solve the enigma of life.

When he dwelt on the difficulty of assigning to nature and education their relative share in determining conduct and character, hundreds of varied pictures would present themselves to his imagination. In all these investigations, the dead and living were as one. The only question he asked himself was: To what extent do they exemplify the eternal idea? Eberhard's form would often appear to him; sometimes, in all the dewy freshness of youth; at others, in its last, sad aspect. Irma was also summoned by the spirit of knowledge and, although never mentioned by name, was made to illustrate the present disturbed state of the public mind.

That day, many of Gunther's thoughts had been of Irma.

There was a gentle knock at the door. His grandchild entered, and Gunther's countenance brightened at the sight of her. For hours, his thoughts had been of grand abstractions, of past memories, and of general laws, and now, blithe and cheerful childhood saluted him. He went into the sitting-room with his granddaughter.

The family seated themselves at the table. Letters and newspapers were left untouched until after the meal was finished.

"Did Adolph set out punctually?" enquired Gunther.

He received a full and explicit answer. Gunther's son, who owned the chemical works at the capital, had been visiting his parents for several days. He had left that morning, but Gunther had said "good-by" the evening

before. It was a peculiar, but well-weighed custom of his, to avoid the excitement of the hour of parting. They had many visitors, for their house was, in the best sense of the word, a hospitable one; but Gunther would suffer nothing to disturb him during the morning hour.

It was a merry breakfast party. Paula remarked that spring had surely come, for the wood-carver who lived in the neighborhood had thrown his old felt shoes out of the window, and that this was even a surer token than the coming of the swallows.

After breakfast, Gunther took up his letters, carefully examining the address and postmark of each, and arranging them in the order in which they were to be read.

The first one he opened bore the seal of the state department. It was from Bronnen, who, since his elevation to the highest office under the government, had kept up a regular correspondence with his old friend Gunther, and had, indeed, twice visited him in his new home.

Gunther's face brightened while he read the letter. After he had finished it, he quietly laid it aside and said:

"Friend Bronnen intends to pay us a visit shortly."

Paula turned away quickly, and bent down to kiss her little niece. Although Gunther was still reading, her movement did not escape his notice. After he had looked through the rest of his letters, he took up the newspapers. He was in a thoughtful mood, and would now and then ask Paula to read certain passages aloud to him.

"One often wishes," said he, "—that is, I have often heard others express the desire—to be able, after death, to look down upon the world again. It is a mere phrase, however, which seems deep only to those who have not weighed it properly. All that we possess, see, or understand, lies in the world in which we live and move."

The remark seemed a singular one, and Paula was about to follow it up with a question, when a sign from her mother hinted that she had better not. The idea had evidently separated itself from a chain of reasoning which had engaged the mind of the solitary philosopher.

"You will have to answer several letters for me," said Gunther to Paula, who acted as his secretary. "Come along!"

He was about to leave the room, when a special messenger arrived with a letter for him. It was written in blue ink and was from the queen. Gunther opened it and read as follows:

“ . . . *April 5th.*

‘Your letter seems laden with fresh mountain breezes. If I were not afraid lest you might deem it inconsistent with the dignity of the subject, I should request you to give me the summary of your philosophy of life, in an epistolary form. What cannot be given in that way, has not yet acquired communicable shape. In a letter we have the effect of the personal presence of the writer. And believe me, for I know of what I speak, you cannot imagine how much your ideas lose in impressiveness, when you thus, as it were, put them away from yourself and cause it to seem that another might have said the self-same thing. A letter has a voice of its own, and, while I write, I am reminded that your friend Horace wrote letters in verse and that the apostles also availed themselves of the epistolary form.

“Your remark that the myriad forms of life which you have from time to time beheld, now throng about your bark as if it were Charon’s, has made me quite uncomfortable. I cannot imagine that you are only leading us into the realms of darkness. The problem before you is the knowledge of life. I must have misunderstood your meaning. I suppose that you are treating each group or epoch as if it were an individual, and that, with delicate touch, you note its every pulsation.

“It is quite charming to think that you can even find place for my modest doings in the grand march of human development. I am well aware that my interest in beneficent institutions is episodic and incomplete; and yet my whole heart is enlisted in their behalf. And this I owe to you. We know how small and imperfect our life is, but we must aim at greatness and perfection, and can best contribute to it by faithfully discharging the small duties that lay near at hand. Working for others rescues one from introspection, and thus expands the mind. When busied with self-contemplation, we are apt to put either too flattering, or too disparaging an estimate upon

ourselves. It is only by what we are able to accomplish that we can really measure our value. I often ask myself whether I should ever have realized all this, if I had remained possessed of perfect happiness. My bent lay in another direction. I had a taste, and perhaps some talent, for the cultivation of the beautiful, and aimed to adorn life with festivals. Fate has decreed otherwise, and it is well. There should be no feasting, while there is so much suffering to alleviate. I felt so happy while wearing the one crown—and now I must bear the other willingly.

"I was, at first, pleased with your remark that the lists of the members of beneficent institutions are the only true church record of modern times; but, on second thought, I could not help finding that you free-thinkers are terrorists as well. The church has rights, too, as long as she is willing modestly to place herself side by side with other educational and charitable institutions, and accord them equal rights with herself.

"As patron of various charitable institutions, I have been brought into personal contact with ladies of the middle class, and find many of them exceptionally cultured and well-bred. As you can readily imagine, it cost quite an effort to get some burgher names to be used for more than mere show. Minister Bronnen has been of great assistance to me. My committee for the blind asylum includes a charming Jewess, Madame —, who is just as modest as she is firm and decided in character. I think you once mentioned her to me.

"At the last examination of the blind, I was quite indignant at the clergyman, who referred to their fate as a wise dispensation of Providence. The only way in which I could show my displeasure at this piece of unctuous barbarism, was to ignore his presence.

"I read much religious history, and when I review past ages, I feel as if sitting by the waterfall which we have so often looked at together. The stream flows unceasingly and, though the water is ever changing, its source and its channel are ever the same. Its waves and its eddies remain in the same place; the rocky masses, where they were on the day of their creation. In time, the rocks

become covered with mosses and flowers, and in the course of many thousand years, new channels become hollowed out by the gradual action of the waters or by some sudden convulsion of nature. Such is the course of history. We are mere drops flowing down the foaming, bubbling stream.

"I observe that I have left several of your inquiries unanswered. You express a wish to learn my views of the various charitable institutions. But here I experience both the advantages and the disadvantages of my position. I am never quite sure whether my visit has not been announced in advance and prepared for. The advantage of my position, however, is, that the poor and unfortunate are rendered happy by my very presence, or by a few words from me. Yes, the first duty of those who are so highly favored, is to be kind to the unfortunate. But there is one thought that ever disturbs me. It is both right and necessary, and perhaps expedient, that these children should be educated and cared for in common—but this method unfortunately deprives them of that which most strengthens the young soul:—solitude.

"You find that I have become cheerful, and you hope that it may be something more than a passing mood. I myself believe that the key-note of my inner life has changed from a minor to a major mood, but the great dissonance still remains. Do not, I beg of you, imagine that I encourage this feeling. I have a right to claim that the great precept: 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,' expresses my inner nature. I understand it thus:—if there be aught in your desires and efforts which might harm yourself or the world, be unmerciful toward yourself, and, instead of regarding it as an essential element of your being, pluck it out.

"But, my friend, I cannot find the offense. I must bear the one great sorrow of my life. How often I long for deliverance! He, too, suffers, and doubly, because of his guilt. The thought often overwhelms me, and, even now, while I write these lines, I shudder—for the shadow of death stands between us. How can it be exorcised?"

"April 6th.

"I have not yet thanked you for that which is best in your letter. That you, too, are delighted with the free and consistent changes in the government, affords me great comfort. I read much that is good about the new rule, but I read and heard just as much in praise of the old, and there are many who maintain that there has been no break, and that, although the key is changed, the tune is still the same.

"What makes human beings take such a pride in never changing?

"But, never mind; as long as the good and the right are brought about, it matters not.

"Those who form our immediate circle look upon the disbanding of the guard as an actual revolution. I have just begun to realize that it formed a privileged caste, which, although we scarcely knew of its existence, had come to be looked upon as a matter of course.

"Do you remember my once asking you whether there are any really happy beings on earth? Your life is the answer to my question, and your greatest happiness lies in the fact that you have no false part to perform, nothing which is opposed to your judgment and convictions.

"I now see my error in regarding your mode of thought as the philosophy of solitude. You hold fast to the harmony of life. But I have not yet rid myself of a fear lest that which is real should, as it were, become volatilized, causing the living forms of the vast human multitude to disappear. In that case, the spirit alone would remain, or, if I understand aright, would lose itself in matter, when all individuality and all participation in actual life would cease.

"I cannot help interesting myself in individual inmates of these institutions. I can help the cause as a whole, but I can only love individuals.

"I am greatly comforted by one piece of information you give me:—that, in all history, there is no age that was satisfied with itself. We fondly dream of a golden age, but the golden age is to-day or never.

"But now as to matters that concern us more nearly. You ask me to tell you of my little Woldemar. I do so

with pleasure, but must be careful not to weary you with a thousand and one of his little sayings and traits. I follow your advice and endeavor to interest myself in his questions, instead of teaching him that which he does not care to know. He is quite decided, both in his likes and dislikes. I think that this is well, and let him have his own way. His disposition, is, to a marked degree, that of the king; he is quite fond of music. I think it good for him that he was, literally speaking, sung to while in his cradle, although the songs were from the lips of such hypocritical specimens of culture and simplicity. Ah, my dear friend, that one sad memory still casts its dark shadow over all my thoughts and all that I behold."

" April 7th.

"And now this tiresome letter is nearly at an end. We are coming to you, my dear friend. Woldemar and I, I and Woldemar.

"I told Woldemar, and he at once added in a decided tone:

"'But Schnipp and Schnapp' (his two ponies) 'must go, too.'

"To be brief—the king has granted my request. For the benefit of my health, I may pay you a visit of four weeks during midsummer and take Woldemar with me. Orders have already been given, and Minister von Bronnen has, I understand, made all the necessary arrangements to have the dairy-farm in your neighborhood prepared for a small suite.

"This year, we shall walk together, on Goethe's birthday.

"But my letter is long enough already, and I shall not begin another sheet. If, as I am willing to admit, you really possess a power over your native mountains, let them be bright and cloudless, while welcoming to you and yours, your friend,

"MATHILDE.

"Postscript.—Bronner has visited you. He had much to tell me, and when I inquired about your youngest daughter, his features seemed to betray his emotion. Was I mistaken? Remember me to your wife and children. I trust that the queen's presence will not embarrass them."

CHAPTER III.

IT seems as if, even in the quietest life, there are days in which the whole world has, as it were, agreed that visits and interruptions should never cease.

Gunther was in his room, and had scarcely had time to compose himself, after reading the queen's letter. It was evident, he thought, that the king designed to bring about a reconciliation between himself and his consort, through the agency of the dismissed friend. Gunther was willing to aid him in this, but not to have the even tenor of his life interfered with. The queen's hint in regard to Bronnen accorded with his own observations, and just then he could hear Paula singing—for the first time this year by the open window—and her voice seemed expressive of a bridal moon. He felt that Paula deserved to be happy, and that her marriage with his exalted friend would best promote the happiness of both. But he was firmly resolved, even in that event, never again to leave his birth-place.

Buried in thought, Gunther was sitting in his room.

The servant announced the freeholder's wife.

"No—Walpurga!" cried a voice, and before the servant could bring the answer, Walpurga had entered the room.

"Ah, dear Doctor, you're our neighbor! I heard, only a minute ago, that you were living here, and it's scarcely four hours' walk from our farm. Yes, that's the way people live hereabouts: alone and away from each other, just as if one were dead."

She offered her hand to Gunther, but he was busily engaged in gathering up some papers, and inquired:

"Does your mother still live?"

"Alas! no. Oh, if she had only lived to see Doctor Gunther once more! Who knows whether she wouldn't be living yet, if we could have called you when she was sick."

Walpurga wept at the remembrance of her mother. Gunther seated himself and asked:

"What is it you want?"

"How? What?" asked Walpurga, quickly, drying her tears. "And you never once ask how it fares with me?"

"You're prosperous and have changed but little."

"May I sit down?" asked Walpurga, in an anxious voice. This cold reception from one who had always been so kind to her, affected her so deeply that she could scarcely stand. She looked about her as if bewildered, and at last said:

"And is there nothing more you want to ask me? Where I live and how my husband and children are?"

"Walpurga," said Gunther, rising from his seat, "lay aside your old acting."

"What? acting? I don't know what you mean! What have I to do with acting?"

"That does not concern us now. Did you want to ask me anything? or have you anything to tell me?"

"To be sure; that's just why I came."

"What is it?"

"Yes; but you seem so strange that my thoughts are quite mixed up. Hansei doesn't know that I've come here, and not another soul in the world is to know about it but yourself. I can keep a secret; I have kept one. I can be trusted."

"I know it," said the physician, in a hard voice.

"You know it? How? You can't know it, and I shan't tell you all of it, either. I might have told you, but after such a reception, I can't."

"Do as you please; speak or be silent; but cut it short, for I have very little time."

"Then I'd rather come some other time."

"I can't receive you for mere talk. Tell me now what you have to say."

"Well then, Doctor—Oh, dear me, to think that you don't even shake hands with me. I can't get over it. But I see, that's the way it is with great folk; it's all the same—thank God, I know where I'm at home!"

"Cease your empty talk!" said Gunther, interrupting her still more sharply. "What have you to tell me? Can I help you in any way?"

"Me? Thank God, nothing ails me. I only wanted to say that under-forester Steingassinger lives out on the

dairy-farm, and that his wife is my friend and companion, Stasi. Early last winter, she told me that the king was coming here this summer, and all I wanted to say was that if he cares to pay me a visit at the freehold, he's quite welcome. I might have said something more, but I see I'd better not. I'd rather not break an oath."

Gunther nodded.

"If the king wishes to pay you a visit, I will tell him what you have said."

"And isn't our dear, good queen coming, too! I've often been kept awake at nights by anger and sorrow, when I thought that she doesn't concern herself about me. And she promised me so solemnly that she would. I can't understand how it is; but it's all right, I suppose. And how is the little prince? And is it true that you are not in favor and have been dismissed from the court? And is that why you are living here in this little house?"

Gunther gave her an evasive reply, and said that he had other matters to attend to.

Walpurga arose from her seat, but could not move from the spot. She could not understand why she should be treated thus, and it was only because she had previously made up her mind to do so, that she invited Gunther to visit her, and asked permission to see Madame Gunther for a few moments. She hoped that she, at least, would receive her kindly and afford her some explanation of the Doctor's repellant manner.

"Go to her," replied Gunther, turning away and taking up a book. Walpurga left the room.

She stopped in the passageway and asked herself whether she was not dreaming. She who had once been the crown prince's nurse was now treated as if they had never known her. She, the freeholder's wife—her pride rose, as she thought of her vast homestead—was sent away like a beggar.

She no longer cared to speak with Madame Gunther. Her lips trembled with grief at the thought of how wicked the great people were. And yet they could praise this house, and she, too, had once praised it, as though none but holy persons lived in it.

She left the house, and, while walking through the gar-

den, met Madame Gunther, who started back when she recognized Walpurga.

"Don't you remember me?" asked Walpurga, holding out her hand towards her.

"Indeed I do," said Madame Gunther, without noticing the hand that was offered her. "Where do you come from?"

"From my farm. I'm the freeholder's wife, and if you, Madame, had come to me, I wouldn't have let you stand out of doors in this way; I'd have asked you to come inside, into my room."

"But I don't ask you," replied Madame Gunther, "I put nothing in the way of those who leave the straight path, but I do not invite them into my house."

"And when did I leave the straight path? What have I done?"

"I am not your judge."

"Any one may judge me. What have I done? You must tell me."

"I must not; but I will. You will have to answer to yourself how all the money was earned with which you bought your great farm. Good-day!"

She went into the house.

Walpurga stood there, alone. The houses, the mountains, the woods, the fields—all swam before her, and her eyes were filled with bitter tears.

Gunther had been looking out of the window, during Walpurga's interview with his wife, and, by the manner of the latter, felt satisfied that the peasant woman had been told some unpleasant truths.

He now saw Walpurga walk away; she would stop now and then, and dry her tears with her apron. The woman repents, at any rate, thought he to himself, and she's only another proof of the far-reaching and all-corroding effects of evil.

It was long before Gunther could be made to believe that Walpurga had received a large sum of money in return for wicked services, but it had been judicially proven that the farm had been paid for in new coin, such as only passes through princely hands. And just because Gunther had believed in Walpurga's simple true-heartedness, and had

staked his word upon it, he was all the more embittered against her.

He was resolved to clear up the matter as soon as the opportunity offered.

CHAPTER IV.

PROUD and happy as Walpurga had been when she left home in the morning, it was with a heavy heart that she returned at evening.

She might well be proud, for no farmer's wife could present a better appearance. Franz, the late cuirassier, had broken in the foal. It was harnessed to the little Bernese wagon and looked around as if pleased when Walpurga came out, dressed in her Sunday clothes and accompanied by Burgei. Hansei helped his wife into the wagon and then gave her the child.

"Come back safe and sound," said he, "and Franz, take care of the horse."

"Never fear!" was Franz's answer, and the horse started off at a lively gait, as if it were mere child's play to draw such a load.

Hansei stood looking after his wife and child for a while and then turned about and went off to his work. He only nodded to Irma, who was looking out of her window and waving a farewell to Walpurga. Walpurga rode off, holding her hand to her heart, as if to repress the joy with which it was overflowing.

What was there better in the world than a well-arranged household like the one she was just leaving, and to feel, moreover, that the people she met would know that she was well-to-do in the world? But Walpurga was proud of something else which the people could not see.

She had, with great circumspection, arranged quite a difficult affair.—On the following morning, Irma was to go to the shepherd's hut, and all danger of discovery would be averted. It is no trifling matter to keep such a secret a whole winter, for Irma had judged rightly. Walpurga encouraged Irma's plan of spending the entire summer in deeper solitude. Stasi, whose husband had heard it from the chief forester, told her that the king intended

to visit the neighboring village during the following summer. She feared for Irma, and now her fears had taken a still more decided shape. Stasi's husband had been removed to the dairy-farm and had been ordered to arrange the forest paths and drives, preparatory to the king's arrival.

Hansei was quite willing that his wife, instead of going to the neighboring village, should go to a more distant town, in order to purchase the articles of use and comfort which it would be necessary for Gundel and Irma to take with them to the shepherd's hut. This afforded her an opportunity to fulfill her promise to visit Stasi in her new home. He even consented that Burgei should go along. And thus Walpurga drove off, her heart full of happiness, and with a kindly smile of greeting for all whom she met on the road.

"I only wish," said Franz, "that we could drive along the lake, and by our old village, for we all came from there; you and I, Burgei and the horse."

Franz had bestowed especial care upon his appearance.

His face beamed with joy, for he, too, cherished a secret thought. He intended to buy a silver ring to place on Gundel's finger, before she went to the shepherd's hut.

"Be careful of that horse," replied Walpurga. "He's so very young. What a fine day it is. The cherries down here aren't in blossom yet, and the sapling we brought from home is blossoming to-day, for the first time. Didn't you see it?"

"No."

They drove on in silence.

When they drew near to the village in which Stasi lived, Franz, who drove about the country a good deal, said:

"This pretty brook flows from up near our new meadow. It comes out of the rocks scarcely a rifle-shot from there."

Walpurga smiled at the thought that a stream that flowed far through the country, had its source on her own land. Yes, no one knows what fortune may have in store for him.

Stasi was delighted at Walpurga's arrival, and was lavish in her praise of all that belonged to her friend. She declared that the king himself had not a finer horse, a

better-behaved servant, a lovelier child or a better wife, than Hansei had. Wherever she took Walpurga, the laborers who were clearing the roads, or building bridges, would stop for a while to look at the farmer's handsome wife and the child who, both in dress and feature, was the very picture of her mother.

Stasi prepared an excellent meal. Walpurga had brought, as a gift, enough butter and eggs to last for a great while. In the new inspector's dwelling, as great honor was shown Walpurga as if she were the queen herself.

At last, Walpurga set about making her purchases, and showed that she was sensible and aware of what her position required. She always bought the best of everything, and did not higggle long about the price.

They had returned to the dairy-farm, and Walpurga was on the point of confiding a portion of her secret to Stasi, so as to put her on her guard as to the king, when she heard of the distinguished man who, for nearly four years past, had been living in the little town.

"Dear me! why he's the best friend I have!" said Walpurga. She handed the child to Stasi and hurried off to Gunther's house. She felt as if her heart would burst with joy, and was obliged to sit down before the house, for a while, to get her breath.

But while she walked back to the farm, she did not once raise her eyes from the ground. She could not. And what annoyed her most of all was that she had told Stasi: "He's the best friend I have."

They expected her to tell about her visit, but all she could say was:

"Don't ask me to tell you what great folks are. If I were to begin I couldn't get through before to-morrow, and I've got to go, or it'll be dark before we get home."

Walpurga became quieter and sadder, the more Stasi and her husband praised Doctor Gunther. She dared not tell what had happened to her. This is all you get, thought she, if you depend on the respect which others are to show you. Long after she had left them, Stasi and her husband spoke of how strange and changeable Walpurga was. But she was glad that she was no longer obliged to look any one in the face. And now, at this

late day, she was reminded of something that she had long since forgotten. "Oh, dear mother!" said she aloud to herself. "You were right. Everything in this world must be paid for, and now the gold is to be paid for—but how?"

She seated her child upon her lap as though it was all that was left to her. She hugged and kissed it and, at last, it fell asleep, resting upon her heart. She grew calmer, although she keenly felt the wrong that had been done her, and wondered what might yet be in store for her. When, while in her old home, the envy and enmity of the villagers had annoyed her, she could easily console herself with the fact that they were simple, ignorant people; but what could she say now? Was she to experience her old troubles over again? And there was no one to whom she could confide them; her mother was gone; she could not tell Hansei and, least of all, Irmgard.

It was twilight when she at last caught a glimpse of home. Mustering up all her courage, she said to herself:

"The best thing I can do is to let suspicion rest on me until I die, or till she dies; for then no one will come near us, and I needn't have any fear for my dear Irma, who has far more to bear than I have. Thank God, I didn't betray my secret; and how lucky it is, she's now going up into the wilds where no one will find her."

Full of courage, she went into the house and told Hansei of her visit to Stasi, but nothing more.

"I have borne it alone, thus far," said she to herself. "I'll do so, hereafter."

With great self-command, she assumed a cheerful air while with Hansei and Irma, and romped with her boy, for whom she had bought a little wooden horse.

CHAPTER V.

THE evening of preparation was an unquiet one. Hansei, who had much to do, would again and again busy himself with the cow-bells, the tones of which pleased him greatly. He had purchased a well-tuned set, and Irma had praised them when he showed them to her.

They went to bed early, for, on the next morning, they would have to rise long before daybreak.

Hansei, who had been asleep for some time, awoke and heard Walpurga crying and sobbing.

"For God's sake! what's the matter?"

"Oh, if mother were only living!" said Walpurga. "If I only still had my mother!"

"Don't act so. Don't cry, now; it's sinful!"

"What? A sin to mourn for my mother?"

"It all depends on how you mourn. I've often heard it said that, so long as grass hasn't grown over the grave, you may weep for the dead without doing harm to them or the living. After that, there should be no more weeping for the dead; for, as the old proverb says: 'It wets their clothes in the other world.' Don't fall into sinful ways, Walpurga. Your mother lived out her time, and thus it is in the world. Parents must die before their children, and, although I trust that our children won't forget us when we're gone, I hope they'll be able to think of us without weeping. But now—why do you let me talk so much? Am I right, or wrong? What makes you so silent?"

"Yes, yes; it's all right. But don't, I beg of you, ask me anything more now. My head is full of all sorts of thoughts. Good-night."

"Good-night, and don't forget to say 'good-night' to your idle thoughts."

A fleeting smile passed over Walpurga's face at Hansei's kind words, but in the next moment she was again a prey to sad despair and a feeling of utter loneliness. She had wept for her mother, because she alone could have shared Irma's secret with her; but now, when a new and crushing burden oppressed her, there was no living one who could help her.

She suddenly recalled the evening when she had stood in the palace yard, feeling as if she had been transported into the heart of the enchanted mountain, and awed by the dimly lighted statues that seemed to be staring at her. She had come away, bringing golden treasure with her; but what had clung to it? Resentment at the injustice she had experienced gnawed at her heart. "That's the

way with the great folk," she muttered, between her teeth. "They condemn without a hearing. I could justify myself, but I won't do it."

"Perhaps you'd rather Irmgard wouldn't move out to the hut?" asked Hansei, after a while.

"Why, I thought you were asleep, long ago," answered Walpurga. "Good-night, again."

She asked herself how it would be if Hansei were to learn what was said of her. How would he bear it? And wasn't it wonderful that, thus far, nothing had been heard of it?

All her pride in the good opinion of others suddenly turned into shame. The peculiar gift she possessed of imagining what people were saying and thinking, again tormented her, and everything seemed confused, as if a half-waking dream.

She determined to lighten her heart by pouring out her woes to Irma. She sat up in bed and felt for her clothes, but she quickly checked the impulse. How could she inflict this on the penitent? Irma had sufficient strength of mind to renounce everything, and even to let the world regard her as dead. How trifling was Walpurga's trouble in comparison with hers!—And was not the queen also an innocent sufferer? Was not one obliged to suffer for another, all the world through?

She felt as if suddenly endowed with a strength she had never before known. She was willing to suffer for Irma, and even to sacrifice her own good name, for the sake of protecting the penitent.

She thanked fate that Doctor Gunther had treated her unkindly. How would it have been if a friendly reception on his part had induced her to betray a portion of her secret?

The elements that mingled in Walpurga's character were now in agitation, now in repose; the quiet life at home, the unquiet one at court, vanity, honor, humility, a desire to appear of consequence—all these were in a constant ferment. But at last all was clear.

"What have you done for Irma, after all?" she asked herself. "Nothing; you've only let her live with you."

For Irma's sake, she was willing to submit to disgrace.

"It isn't what people think of you, but what you really are, that's most important," thought she to herself, and breathed freely once more.

When she, at last, calmly rested her head on her pillow, she felt as if her mother's hand were stroking her brow.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was a mild spring night.

Irma was sitting by the spring and looking up at the starry heavens. She felt strangely at the thought of again wandering forth, for on the following morning she was to start for the shepherd's hut, there to spend the summer. How would it be with her when she again sat here in the night, listening to the stream rushing by?

At that moment she heard whispering. It seemed to come from the dark stable, the door of which was open.

"Yes, Gundel; our mistress is just as changeable as April weather. On the way from home, she was as jolly as she could be, and on the way back, she was just as glum as if she'd been beaten. She went to see the great doctor. Something must have happened to her. But what does she matter to us, after all? She bought pots and pans, but I got something better. Let's have your hand. There! I put this little silver ring on your finger and make you fast to me, in soul and body, for life. Now you may go wherever you choose; you're mine, all the same."

Hearty kisses were heard, and Gundel at last said:

"But you'll come up to the meadow to see us, once in a while, won't you?"

"Of course I will!" And then there was more soft and unintelligible whispering.

"Why, just look!" said Franz, suddenly; "there's cousin Irmgard, and she's heard every word of what we've said."

"That's no harm; she knows all about it, and so I'll have something to talk with her about, all summer. Come, let's go to her. You'll see how kind she is."

They went to Irma.

She took them both by the hand and said:

"Let your love be as pure, as fresh, as inexhaustible as this spring." She dipped her hand into the spring, which glittered in the moonlight, and sprinkled the two lovers with water.

"That's as good as if it came out of a holy water pot," cried Franz. "Now everything will be all right. I've no fear. You, spring, and you, elder-tree, are witnesses that we both belong together, and will never leave each other. Good-night."

Franz went back into the stable and closed the door. Gundel accompanied Irma to her room and slept on the bench, for her father, the little pitchman, had already gone before them to the shepherd's hut and had taken her bed and various household articles with him.

It was long before Irma fell asleep. She felt as if she could not help living over, in anticipation, the many days and nights she was to spend upon the mountain. She was restless, and lay there thinking, until at last her thoughts became confused and bewildered.

At last, she asked in a soft voice:

"Gundel, are you still awake?"

"Oh yes, and I'm sure Franz is awake, too. He isn't as well off as I am, and has no one to talk to as I have. Oh, how thankful I am to you! I'll make things as pleasant and as comfortable for you as I can. Oh, what a good, honest soul Franz is! Do you hear the cows lowing? They can't rest, either. I feel as if I could already hear the bells that they're going to wear to-morrow, and I think they must know all about it, too. Oh Irmgard, if you only had a sweetheart, too. I know how it will be with you. It'll be just as it says in the story—and you deserve it, too. There was once upon a time a king who rode through the forest and found a beautiful girl tending the flocks; and he put her on his horse, took her home with him, gave her clothes of gold, and put a diamond crown upon her head. And then the queen—Oh, the bells, the queen—come, White-spot, the bells—come, come, come—and so—"

Gundel slept, but Irma lay awake and looked out into the moonlight. The whole world seemed a marvel, and

vague fairy pictures filled her mind. She smiled, and her eyes sparkled until they were at last closed in sleep. But the smile rested on her features, although there was none to see it, save the moon, calmly looking down from on high.

CHAPTER VII.

WE often experience sadness and hesitancy in carrying out projects which have been wisely conceived and hopefully determined on. And thus it proved when the time came to set out for the shepherd's hut.

It was before daybreak. Irma stood at the open hearth in Walpurga's room, and shivered with the cold.

Although Irma had overcome all longings since her return from her short visit to the world, a new and deep feeling of homelessness had come over her, just as if this was the first day of her solitude. She often looked about her, as if she saw a figure approaching with a light bundle under its arm—and that figure was herself, but oh! how changed. She scarcely felt a desire for food or drink; nor did she care to speak. She lived entirely in and from herself. But, although silent, she was cheerful and kind toward every one.

The little pitchman was the first to note this change, and he was of the opinion that a summer spent on the mountain meadows would prove of great benefit to Irma, for he maintained that she was ill, although she always seemed well and was ever at work.

If everything had been specially arranged, Walpurga's purpose could not have been better served. Irma's wishes and the uncle's advice were in accord. Besides this, there was danger of discovery, on account of the king's visit to the neighboring village, and whatever danger lay in this, Walpurga meant to avert from Irma.

The morning found Walpurga gay and cheerful, as if after a hardly won victory. Her eyes often rested on Irma, who was looking fixedly at the open hearth-fire.

"You'll see," said she to her, "you'll be quite a differ-

ent being up there. I can hear you singing already, and then we'll sing together again."

She went on humming to herself the air,

Oh ! blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee.

But Irma did not join in the song.

"I shall support life as long as it supports me," said Irma, as if speaking to herself, and holding her hands before the fire.

It was not long before the two women, who were thus standing quietly by the hearth, were called away to the stable outside. Everything was in readiness. The little pitchman, who was conversant with all such mysteries, had, on the previous day, arranged everything so that the cattle might be well and hearty in their new abode. He had brought a clod of earth and three ants from the meadow, and had mixed the earth with some sweet-scented clover, St. Johnswort, lavender and salt, into which mixture he dropped some oil of tar, and this was the last food given the cattle. The little pitchman had returned from the meadow during the night and, although he had not been asked to do so, had prepared the mysterious fodder in order to oblige Hansei, who was not yet quite familiar with the ways of this section of the country.

Now that the cattle had swallowed the magic potion, they were protected against all witchcraft and sickness, and would be as much at home on the meadows as if they had been born there. And now that day began to dawn, the cows became unmanageable. Peter sprinkled every one of them with holy water; but in spite of charms and holy water, these tame, domestic creatures seemed to have been converted into wild beasts. All was confusion within the enclosure that confined them, the cows were bellowing and running about wildly, and, in the midst of the din, was heard the shouting of the cowboys. The little pitchman bade them let the cows have their own way and at last they were quiet. Gundel put the wreath on the horns of the large brown bell-cow, and fastened the leader's bell around her neck. The other cows were also provided with bells. And now the leader was sur-

rounded by the rest of the herd, who glared at her furiously; but she seemed so proud and scornful that none ventured to challenge her.

"And now let's be off, for God's sake!" cried the little pitchman, opening the gate. The procession started. Franz came last of all, holding the powerful red bull by its strong short horns and dragged by, rather than leading it. As soon as the bull was out of the stable, he stood still and looked about him with quite a dangerous air, and then, tossing up his head, stepped off alone, in quite a dignified manner. But as soon as he was outside of the gate, he bellowed loudly.

Although everything had been quietly arranged, there was yet hurrying at the end. Walpurga and Hansei accompanied Irma for a part of the way.

Irma was silent. Her step was firm, and yet it seemed to her as if her will had nothing to do with this, and as if she were urged onward by another.

"You look more cheerful already," said Hansei to Irma.

A nod was her only reply.

They soon overtook the herd which had gone ahead. The herdsman had waited for them, for it would not do to drive the cattle through the villages unless the *sennerin** were with them.

They might have taken the other road. It lay back of the village, and was somewhat shorter; but why should they not for once show themselves and their herds before they went into solitude? And so the cattle with their beautiful bells were driven through the village, while cheers and hurrahs resounded from all sides.

When they ascended the mountain on the other side of the village, and struck the forest road which Hansei had cut, he could not refrain from calling Irma's attention to what he had accomplished.

In the heart of the forest, where the royal arms were carved on the boundary-stone—for it was here that the

* "He who goes up with the cattle into the mountains, during the good season, is a 'Senn.' In Switzerland, this is done by men; in the Eastern Alps, in the Bavarian highlands, and in Austria, generally by women—the 'Sennerin,' 'Almerin.'"

royal preserves began—Hansei took leave of Irma. Walpurga, who had also said "good-by," still accompanied her for a short distance. There was so much that she wanted to tell Irma, and yet all she could say was: "Don't be afraid; I'll come to see you next Sunday. If you find it lonesome, come back to us again. Nobody forces you to stay up here; but if you can stay, you'll find it'll do you good."

Walpurga, whose heart was oppressed with her secret, bade Irma a hurried farewell and left her.

Hansei was sitting on the boundary-stone, waiting for his wife. After she had joined him, they walked on for some time in silence.

"It often seems to me as if it were all a dream," said he, at last. "We've been here four years this coming autumn, and she's been with us all the time. I can't tell you how much I like her, and still I don't know her; that is, I do know her, so to say, but I don't know her after all."

"Stop a minute, Hansei," said Walpurga.

He stood still. All was silent in the woods. A thick mist had veiled the mountains and the birds were mute. The only sound that broke upon the ear was that of the bells of the distant herd ascending the mountain. Walpurga drew a long breath.

"Hansei," said she at last, "you've stood a hard test. I never would have believed that any man could have done what you have. And now I think I must open the door to you, at last."

"Stop!" said Hansei, interrupting her, "not so fast. Did she tell you to do so, of her own accord? Say 'yes' or 'no'."

"No."

"Then I don't want to know anything about her. You hold her secret in trust, and no one has a right to touch it. Of course, to be honest with you, it has often puzzled me terribly. There's only one thing I want to know; I'm sure she hasn't injured any one and she hasn't stolen, has she? But no matter what she may have done, she's atoned for it all. Tell me only this: Has she any such trouble on her conscience?"

"God forbid! She's harmed no one on earth but herself."

"All right then; we'll say no more about it. Did you see how the deaf and dumb man in the village fell on his knees before her?"

"No."

"But I did; and I heard Babi, the root girl, say that the crazy woman from the farm would never come back again. Now Babi's crazy and Irmgard isn't, but still it frightened me. I don't know—but it seems to me that our home will seem empty, if we don't have Irmgard with us. She's become one of us."

When they had returned to the house and were sitting together in the front room, Hansei said:

"Don't you remember how she advised me to place the table differently, and how she helped to arrange everything, and told uncle to shorten the legs of the chairs, so that they might fit better to the table? I've never seen a farmer's room that looked so beautiful as ours; and she was a great help to you in everything."

Hansei had much to arrange about the house, and Walpurga would often come to him, with one of the children, and exchange a few words with him, while at work. She did not care to be alone. She missed Irma, and yet was happy to know that she was safe in her lonely retreat.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE day did not clear. At noon, the mist changed into heavy rain.

"I wonder if it rains as hard up there, too; she'll be terribly wet," thought Walpurga to herself, and, indeed, it was raining just as heavily up the mountain. Wild, rapid little streams ran across the road and bubbled and splashed down the mountain side.

With the aid of a mountain staff which Hansei had given her, Irma walked on courageously. To protect her against the rain, the little pitchman had given her his great woolen rug, in which there was only a hole to slip the head through. He managed to cover himself with empty corn sacks. He walked at her side, and often said:

"Shall I carry you?"

Irma walked on. The staff was of little use during the ascent; but, now and then, they had to go down a sharp declivity—a sink, as the uncle called it—when she was obliged to plant it firmly and swing herself by it. The little pitchman was always at hand, ready to catch Irma, in case she should slip; but she had a firm step.

As the herd were not yet used to each other, it was quite difficult to keep them together; but the little pitchman knew how to manage the animals, and the bells, ringing merrily together, seemed like a constantly ascending melody.

"The cattle are well off," said the little pitchman, "they can find their fodder along the wayside. But the mistress has given me something for ourselves. We'll soon reach the 'Witch's Table,' and there we can sit under shelter, while we take a bite."

They soon came upon a broad, projecting rock, resembling a semicircular table. Here there was dry and sandy soil, where only the lion-ant dwelt, in his funnel-shaped cell. Gundel, Franz, the little pitchman and Irma sat down under shelter of the "Witch's Table" and ate heartily, while the cows, that grazed outside, were left in charge of one of the cowboys.

"The rain will last a long time," said Franz. The little pitchman called him to account, and said that no one could tell how long the rain would last. He wanted to encourage Irma.

He caught a lion-ant and showed how clever the little creature was; how it made a pitfall in the fine sand and hid itself at the point of its funnel-shaped cell, and how the common ant, unconscious of danger, would come along and tumble into the pit, from which it could not get out again, for the fine sand rolls away from under its feet, while the rogue who is hiding blinds the captive by throwing sand in its eyes, and then catches and eats it. "And strangest of all," said he, "next year that gray worm will be a brown dragon-fly on the lake."

He well knew that such a glimpse of nature was more pleasing to her than food or inspiring words.

With renewed vigor, they went still further up the

mountain. As if invigorated by the herbage of the higher regions, the cattle became livelier. At last they drew near the clearing where the new meadow lay. The little pitchman instructed Franz to go on in advance and open the stable door. Franz obeyed at once; soon after that his call was heard, and the cows that had just reached the open meadow bellowed and rushed forward. The rain and mist were now so thick that the hut could not be distinguished until they were within a few steps of it. "That's lucky," cried the little pitchman, "the swallows have already built their nests on our cottage; now all is safe."

He stepped forward, knocked at the door three times, opened it, and offered his hand to Irma with the words: "Let joy enter and sorrow depart!" And thus they were home at last.

Oh, what a comfort to have a sheltering roof over one's head! Irma often looked up, and, her eyes seemed to express the gratitude she felt because of her being at last protected against the angry storm. Now that she was snugly housed in the cottage, it seemed far more gloomy out of doors than while they were trudging through the rain. There was soon a cheerful fire on the large hearth, and the little pitchman, muttering to himself, took something out of his pocket and threw it into the flames.

"Since the world began," said he, "no fire has ever been lighted here, and no smoke has arisen to heaven. We're the first inhabitants. But the swallows—yes, the swallows—that's lucky."

He might have said much more, if he hadn't been called away by Franz, who came to tell him that a cow out in the stable had just calved.

Irma was alone with Gundel. She quickly undressed herself and dried and warmed herself by the fire. But Gundel was called away, too, so that she might know what to do on a like occasion in the future. And now Irma, divested of her outer clothing, sat by the fire. She felt chilled at first, but the sense of cold and of fear quickly left her. She gazed calmly at the cheerful fire—a solitary child of man, alone on the heights. She had

completely forgotten where she was, until she heard voices approaching. She quickly covered herself with the dried clothes. The little pitchman entered and offered his congratulations on the fact that they had been blessed with a splendid steer-calf on the very first day.

Night came on. Franz took his departure. Gundel went with him part of the way and, until she returned, they could be heard calling to each other through the drizzling rain. The inmates of the cottage soon repaired to rest. The little pitchman and the cowboy slept in the hay-loft over the stable. Irma and Gundel slept in the house.

When they awoke, on the following morning, the day was still veiled in a thick mist. "We're in a cloud," said the little pitchman.

The cows were grazing. The bells seemed scattered about, and, in the distance, had a dreamlike sound as of the humming of bees.

Irma had hoped to be alone, and here she was shut up in this little hut with its few inmates. The little pitchman had said that they were the first dwellers on this bit of earth, and it seemed as if nature resented their advances. The wind howled and drove the clouds before it, but always brought fresh ones to replace them, and, now and then, were heard the crash and roar of falling avalanches.

Irma endeavored to work, but to no purpose.

The second night and the second day found them still enveloped in impenetrable clouds. Even the cattle seemed to complain of it, their lowing sounded so sorrowful.

It was early on the third morning, when Irma awoke, feeling as if something had touched her. She arose. A soft gleam of light shone through the crevice in the window-shutter. "The sun has awakened me," said she to herself. She hurriedly dressed and went out of doors.

The fresh and dewy air of morning revived her spirits. A cow, grazing near by, raised its head and looked at her, and then went on eating again.

A silver-gray light gradually dawned in the east, and that wonderful passage from Haydn's "Creation" flashed through Irma's mind. She fancied that the tones assumed tangible, corporeal shapes, arising out of the early-gray of

dawn. By degrees, the gray changed into a golden hue, and then faint streaks of red would flash through it, gradually heightening in color, while down below, stretching into the distance, like a dark and immeasurable stream, lay the darkness of night. At last, rugged cliffs, peaks, and broad mountain ridges raised their heads into the light, while their bases still lay veiled in night which was gradually changing into dark gray. The rosy tint gradually extended and gained in intensity until it covered the heavens. Meanwhile, the giant forms of the mountains stood forth more clearly and at last, dazzling the eyes, the sun appeared, bathing every height in purple and golden hues, while the rolling clouds below appeared like mighty waves. Bright day, warming and illumining the earth, had arisen. Millions of odors arose from every tree, every blade of grass, and every flower. The singing of birds was heard, and Irma opened her arms as if to embrace infinity. She did not sink on her knees, but remained standing upright. Involuntarily, her foot left the ground, as if she could not help soaring away into infinite space. She pressed both hands to her forehead, and when she touched the bandage, it seemed loosened of itself and fell to the ground.

A sunbeam shone upon her brow and she felt that it was now pure. She stood there for a long while, gazing at the sunlight. Her eye was not dazzled by its refulgence. Calm and peaceful harmonies filled her soul. A child of man had witnessed the symbol of creation and had herself been created anew.

Now come, ye days that are still left me, be ye long or short!—Where and with whom I may have to spend them, it matters not; for I am free! I am saved!

All that I now do is only preparation for the journey. The hour draws near and, be it early or late, I am prepared for it. I have lived!

“Why, Irmgard, how strange you look!” exclaimed Gundel, coming out of the hut, and carrying the milk-pail on her head. “Dear me, what a forehead you’ve got, so white and so beautiful! Oh, how beautiful you are! I never saw so smooth and beautiful a forehead before!”

Irma accepted a glass of milk from Gundel, and then tucked up her dress and went out into the woods. It was not until high noon that she returned to the cottage. During the whole day, she had scarcely uttered a word.

In the cottage, she found the little pitchman standing before her table, and arranging a great heap of aromatic herbs and roots.

"Just look," he cried, "I've found something already. Yes, I know a thing or two. I've been gathering clover and mountain parsley for the apothecary. I know everything growing hereabouts that they can use, and many a time has my sister said: 'In the spring everything's sweet and good; and wherever the poison lies, it takes the summer heat to bring it out.' Oh, she was a clever one! Many a time she's said: 'The best things grow up among the clouds.'"

After a short pause, he began again:

"Gundel's right; I must say, I didn't think you were so handsome. But, somehow, you don't look healthy; you must eat more; why, you hardly eat anything."

A grateful smile was Irma only reply.

"Do you know what I'd like to have been?"

"What?"

"Your father."

Irma answered him with a silent inclination of the head. Her father's spirit had been invoked, and it seemed as if he were speaking to her through the lips of this poor, simple-minded man, who continued:

"God forgive me, but I can't help feeling, once in a while, as if you had dropped down from heaven, and had neither father nor mother; and to-day you look so weak that my eyes fill with tears whenever I look at you. Now, do eat a bit!"

He went on chattering as confusedly as if he had been drinking too much, but the refrain was always the same: "Now do eat something!"

To please the good old man, Irma forced herself to do so.

CHAPTER IX.

THE days were bright and cheerful, the nights were glorious.

The air was pure, the view was clear, and all troubled thoughts seemed to have lingered below in the crowded dwellings of men.

"I think you could now sing again," said the little pitchman to Irma; "your voice isn't so hoarse as it was. But you need more sleep. When one is old, sleep runs away of itself. Don't drive it away, as long as it wants to stay with you."

The little pitchman now seemed doubly careful of her, and Irma perceived that her voice was hoarse. She would sit down and rest oftener than she had previously done. She would still roam through the woods and valleys, wherever huntsmen or woodcutter dared venture, but she would so often stop to rest herself that her wanderings resembled the flight of some young bird which, at every short distance, is obliged to stop. She now remembered that this weariness had been upon her ever since her return from the capital. During the winter she had paid no attention to it; but now she thought she could understand Walpurga's motive in urging her to go up to the shepherd's hut. It was because she was ill, and in the hope that she might become well again. And yet she felt no pain. One day, while in the heart of the forest, she tried to sing a scale, but found that she could not. Her head sank upon her breast; and thus, after all—

On Sunday morning Franz came, bringing joy with him.

"Oh, how nice it is," said Gundel, as soon as she found herself alone with Franz. Irma was quite near, however, and heard every word of what she said. "Oh, how nice it is! I used to think my arms were only for work, but now I can do something else with them; I can throw them around somebody's neck and hug and kiss him!"

Gundel, who was usually dull and sullen, had become active and sprightly. She was bustling about all day, scrubbing, washing, milking the cows, making butter and cheese, and was always singing or humming a tune to

herself. With her, singing filled the place of thinking. She was just like a bird that flutters about, singing all day long. Love had awakened her soul, and the self-dependent position in which she now found herself afforded a vent to her native cheerfulness of temperament.

Irma regarded all that environed her as if she were a mere looker-on, taking no part in the life about her.

Tradition tells us of good genii who descend to the earth, remain there long enough to look about them and put things to rights, and then return to heaven. They have no share in the world's cares and troubles. And thus it often seemed to Irma as if she were withdrawing herself from human sight, conversation and sympathy, into the one great idea in which she was wholly absorbed.

She went into the hut, and with her pencil wrote these few words in her journal:

"I desire my brother to give a marriage portion to Gundel and Franz, after my death, so that they may establish a household of their own."

Thereupon she wrapped the journal in the bandage which she had worn on her brow, and, placing her hand on it, vowed that she would not write another word in it. She had recorded enough of her self-questionings and of what her eyes had beheld, to reconcile her with the friend whom she had so deeply injured, as well as with herself. The days that still remained to her, she desired to spend completely, and with herself.

Franz had brought word that Walpurga would not come that day, as her boy was unwell, but that she hoped to come without fail on the following Sunday. Irma was almost pleased at the opportunity thus afforded her to become accustomed to her present life, before being obliged to converse with any one who knew her. She was now surrounded by people to whom her past was unknown. They indulged her wish to be alone, and only addressed her when she asked them a question.

The second and third Sundays passed by, but Walpurga did not come, although she sent up some bread and salt. Irma scarcely cared to conjecture the cause of her absence.

How scornfully Irma had once repelled the thought of "a life in which nothing happens"; but now she realized

it in herself, without the slightest feeling, on her part, that it might have been otherwise. She worked but little, and would lie for hours on her favorite spot on the hillside.

Nature shed its kindly influence upon her. She greeted the dews of early morn, and the dews of evening moistened her locks. Like surrounding nature, she was calm and happy and without a wish. But in the night, when she looked up at the starry skies which, from the mountain height, were clearer and brighter, her soul soared into the infinite. She gazed on the mountains, unchanged since the day of their creation, peaks which no human foot had ever trod, which only the clouds could touch and on which the eagle's eye had rested. Familiar as she was with the life of plants and birds, she now scarcely regarded them. They seemed part of herself, just as her limbs were part of her body. Nature was no longer strange to her. She felt herself a part of it. She had reached that state of calm content in which life seems a pure chain of natural consequences, in which daily doubts and questionings have ceased. The sun rises and sets, the grass grows, the cows graze, and the law of life bids man work and reflect. The world around thee is subject to law and so is thine own life. To man alone is vouchsafed the knowledge of his duty, so that he may learn freely to obey the dictates of his own nature.

This thought illumined her soul with a light as clear as the blue sky above her. It caused her to forget that she had ever lived another life, or had ever erred.

On the fourth Sunday, Irma started out at an early hour and walked as far as the boundary-stone, where she waited for Walpurga and Hansei. Now that they had sent word that they would surely come, Irma longed to see Walpurga, the only being who knew her past and could confirm to her who she was.

She was sitting on the boundary-stone. She had taken off her hat and her brow was bare. She sat there with her head resting on her hand, and wondering why, deep within the soul, there dwells a feeling that resents the surrender of our personality and the desire to know who and whence we are. To others, the galley-slave is only known by the number he bears, but, as to himself, he

knows who he is and can never forget it. Why can we not freely lose ourselves in nature?

Her head drooped still lower. Presently, she heard voices and hurriedly arose.

"Isn't that our Irmgard?" asked Hansei.

"Yes, it is!"

Walpurga hurried up to her and held out her hand; but Hansei stood as if petrified. He had never before seen such a being. It always seemed to him as if there were something superhuman about her. Her whole face was radiant, her eyes larger, and the pure, noble forehead was as white and smooth as marble. Walpurga, who had known Irma when at the height of her beauty, now looked at her with a different feeling, for she was suffering for her sake, in a way that Irma could little dream of. Involuntarily, she pressed her hand against her trembling heart.

"Why don't you shake hands with me, Hansei?" asked Irma.

"I—I—I never saw you look this way before."

A slight blush overspread her forehead. She passed her hand over it. Then she offered her hand to Hansei, who, in his excitement, pressed it so violently that he hurt her.

They walked on together toward the hut, and had gone but a few steps before they were joined by the little pitchman. He had, as was his wont, stealthily followed Irma. He was concerned for her sake, for he saw that something was the matter with her, and was, therefore, loth to leave her alone.

"She looks splendid, don't she?" said he to Hansei, who had remained with him while Irma and Walpurga walked on in front. "But she lives on nothing but milk, just like a little child; and you can't make her remember that, up here, the nights get cold all of a sudden. She always wants to sit out of doors in the damp, night air. I often think she must be an angel and that, all of a sudden, she'll spread her wings and fly away—yes, you may laugh at it, but it ain't far from here up to heaven. 'We're the Lord's nearest neighbors, up here,' as my sister used to say."

Hansei and the uncle went off to look after the cattle. Besides the calf born on the first day, two others had come and all were doing well. It was a full hour before Hansei came to the hut, and his whole bearing expressed his satisfaction with all that had seen.

Meanwhile, Walpurga had examined everything in the hut, and she, too, had found cleanliness and order everywhere.

In the afternoon, their next neighbor, who lived at a mountain meadow about an hour's distance from Hansei's, paid them a visit and brought her zither with her.

It was no small condescension, on the part of the freeholder's wife, to sing with Gundel and the neighbor. Franz joined in, and the little pitchman was also able to take part. Hansei, however, could not sing a note; but his want of ability added to his dignity—a wealthy farmer is supposed to have given up singing.

"This is the only place where you can sing, up here. You can't do it over there, where the road leads into the village," cried Gundel, after the first song. "If you sing, or speak a loud word there, the echo drowns it all."

She ran to the spot and sang a few notes, which were echoed again and again from every mountain and ravine.

"You ought to sing, too," said Walpurga to Irma; "you've no idea how well she can sing."

"I cannot sing," replied Irma; "my voice is gone."

"Then play something for us; you can play the zither beautifully," said Walpurga.

All joined in the request, and Irma was at last obliged to play. The little pitchman held his breath. He had never heard such beautiful playing before, and not one, thought he, knew what Irma could do. She soon modulated into the familiar melody, and the little pitchman was the first to start the song:

Oh, blissful is the tender tie.

It was a happy, cheerful hour.

Hansei now conducted his wife, Irma, and the little pitchman to the spot from which they could catch a glimpse of the lake near their old home. It sparkled

brightly in the sun, and Hansei remarked that it seemed like the look of a human being who had known him from youth up.

Walpurga was afraid lest the scene might awaken sad thoughts in Irma, and turned toward her; but she only said: "It pleases me, too."

Hansei now described the whole neighborhood to Irma, told her where this and that place lay, and showed her the mountain where he had planted so many trees. The forest itself could not be seen, but the rocky peak which rose from it was visible.

Walpurga, meanwhile, drew her uncle aside, and said: "Uncle, my mother's dead—"

"Yes, I know it, and you can't think more of her than I do. Just ask Irmgard how often we talk of her. It always seems to me as if she must be in the next room. It isn't far to heaven from where we now are. She can hear every word we say."

"Yes, uncle; but let me finish what I was going to say. I've got something to tell you."

It went hard with the uncle to listen quietly, for he always had so much to say himself. Without noticing his repeated interruptions, Walpurga continued:

"Uncle, you're a sensible man—"

"May be, but it hasn't done me much good in life."

"Now I want to tell you something—"

"Very well; out with it."

"I'm in trouble about Irmgard—"

"You needn't worry about her. I watch her as if she was the apple of my eye. Make yourself quite easy on that score."

"Yes, uncle, I know all about that; but there are some awful wicked people in the world, and they'll follow you up to the very mountain-tops—"

"Yes, I know; the gend'arme often—"

"Uncle, do listen to me patiently!"

"Yes, yes; I'm not saying a word."

"Well, uncle, mother knew who Irmgard is."

"And so do I. You needn't tell me anything about that. I know her, out and out. I'm not so stupid, depend on that."

"Yes, uncle, that's all right. I wanted to confide something to you—"

"You can trust me with anything. As to that matter, I can call your mother in heaven to bear me witness—"

"There's no need of that. Well, as I was going to say, Irmgard has had a sad life—"

"I know all about it. When I was in the city with her, I made up my mind that there must be something or other of that kind. It may be that they wanted her to marry somebody that she didn't like. May be she's a left-handed child, or may be she's got a husband and left him. She looked at the big houses in such a queer way—she always seemed as if she wanted to creep out of sight."

Walpurga was surprised at her uncle, who would not permit her to say a word, and suddenly it occurred to her: I was just like him once, and thought that I must always keep chatting instead of listening to what others had to tell me. She looked at her uncle for a long while and he, taking it as a compliment, now told her, for the first time, of what he had felt on that journey with Irma, and of all that he had seen while with her—the lions, the serpents, the high priest and the "Magic Flute" were all mixed together in inextricable confusion.

Walpurga made up her mind that there was no need of divulging her secret, and contented herself by telling her uncle that he must never leave Irma alone, and that if any stranger came—no matter who he might be—he should take her secretly into the woods, so that no one should see her.

The uncle promised to do as he was bid.

"Yes," he added, "what a strange world it is. Just think of it! The herbs I take to the apothecary in the next village are for the baths of young Countess Wildenort, the daughter-in-law to the one I used to know. While I was standing in front of the apothecary's the other day, a man came riding by, on a beautiful, glossy black horse. Its legs looked as if they'd been turned in a lathe. The man had a child sitting in front of him on the horse, a boy about the size of our Peter, with a blue frock, and wearing a feather in his hat, and the boy was so like Irmgard it might have been her own child. And

the apothecary said to me that it was Count Wildenort, the son of the one I used to know. And so, when he rode past, I said: 'Good-morning, Count?' He pulled up and asked: 'How do you know me?'

"And I said: 'I knew your father, and he was a good man—' And what do you think he said? Not a word. He rode off without so much as thanking me. They tell me he's not so good a man as his father was, and they say his mother-in-law has him under her thumb, so that he daren't move. But the child is beautiful and the very picture of our Irma. It's wonderful, what strange things happen in the world.'"

Walpurga trembled, and made her uncle promise that he would never mention Irma to a soul in the village.

The uncle also promised that he would not let Irmgard know anything of the matter.

Toward evening, Walpurga and Hansei went home again and, when night came, Franz returned also. The inmates of the shepherd's hut were once more alone. Not a word was spoken among them, for they had talked and heard enough during the day. All was silent. Not a sound was heard but the tinkling cow-bells in the woods and on the green hillside, and the stars shone overhead. Irma was seated on the spot from which the distant lake was visible, and it was long before she retired to rest.

CHAPTER X.

IRMA now spent but a small portion of the day at the workbench. Her work had become even more irksome than at first. Her eye was constantly fixed on the vast and extended mountain prospect, toward which she would ever return from her task with added zest.

The little pitchman, who was quite diplomatic in his way, begged Irma to go with him while he went out to hunt plants and roots, for he said that he was old and did not know but what he might sometime lose his footing, and it would, in that case, be well to have some one with him who could go for help.

After that, Irma spent the greater part of the day with

the little pitchman, wandering through the forest and over hill and dale. Her greatest delight was whenever they reached the spot where the brook arose. It flowed smoothly from a dark, rocky cavern and then boldly galloped down the hill, striking against fragments of rock by the way, now gliding over them, now forcing its way below them, until it reached the first valley, where it formed a basin encircled by tall, silver fir-trees. Thence it flowed through the table-land and, softly murmuring, glided down over the second mountain into the valley below.

The little pitchman plainly saw how much Irma liked to be here. He even thought that he had once heard her sing, and that her voice had been audible above the rushing and roaring of the water, and it was a strange coincidence that most of the herbs of which he was in search could be found in the neighborhood. Now and then, he was fortunate enough to discover a bird's nest, and would show it to Irma, who was as delighted with it as though she were a little child. The animals here seemed as yet to be without fear of man, and the little pitchman maintained that the reason the little birds didn't fly away when Irma looked at them, was because she had such kindly eyes. They flew about her as if she were an old friend, and the mother bird in the nest looked at her affectionately, and did not take wing.

Thus Irma would spend whole afternoons, sitting by the spring and, scarcely conscious of what she was doing, would, now and then, throw some flower which she had plucked into the brook.

The brook flowed through the town in which Gunther lived. A beautiful boy was sitting on its banks, and a red-haired servant in livery was by his side.

The boy ordered the servant to fish out a beautiful flower that was floating by. The servant clambered down the steep bank and, just as he reached the edge of the stream, the boy threw a stone into the water, so that it splashed, and the servant exclaimed: "My young master, you've behaved badly again!"

"Is he at his wild tricks again?" said a tall and handsome young man, with a countenance that bore the marks of dissipation. "What are you doing, Eberhard?"

The boy looked startled and the servant said:

"Nothing, sir. My young master and I were only having a little fun together."

The young man took the boy by the hand and walked with him through the meadow and toward a beautifully situated country-house, while Fitz, the groom, followed. The man in front was Count Eberhard von Wildenort, and the boy with him was his son.

Bruno had given strict orders that his boy should not go near the water. He had a great dread of that element, for it had brought such terrible misfortune upon his family. But, as if by some evil influence, the boy was always drawn toward the wild stream, and Fitz, who always let him have his own way, secretly abetted and accompanied him.

Bruno looked back, shook his finger at Fitz, and then entered the garden of the country-house. His wife was there, sitting in a large arm-chair. A little girl was playing on the gravel path, and a nurse was carrying an infant in her arms. The matin bell was heard, and presently the mother-in-law appeared at the garden gate. She was followed by a servant who carried an embroidered cushion and a prayer-book sparkling with jewels.

The baroness greeted her family with the calm and satisfied air of one who had already fulfilled her highest duties. Bruno offered her his arm and, Arabella following, they repaired to the breakfast table, which had been set in the arbor.

"Dear me!" said the Baroness. "What shall we do with ourselves to-day? It is lovely, and I don't think the weather will change. The apothecary tells me there is a very pretty shepherd's hut a few hours distant from here, the view from which must be exquisite. How would it be if we were to send our servants up before us, to make arrangements for our dining there?"

"Permit me, gracious mother-in-law," replied Bruno, timidly.

"Very well; make a suggestion! Don't leave everything to me. What have you to propose in this deadly-lively solitude, where we are thrown upon the odious privy

councilor, and the female philistines of his family. I beg of you, do propose something."

"In my humble opinion—"

"Don't be so long coming to the point!"

"I think it will be to your interest if I first go myself, to see whether the roads are fair and to prevent you from being disappointed; for, although theatrical shepherdesses are, as a rule, very charming, they are apt to be great frights *au naturel*."

"Thanks! you're really amiable. When will you set out on your reconnaissance?"

"To-day, if you desire it."

"He would like to get off and be a free, single man for one day," said the smiling Baroness to her daughter.

"Oh, I know him! Shall we give him a day?" she asked roguishly.

"You're in a very good humor," replied Bruno. In spite of all her biting remarks, he was always studiously polite toward her. She had thrice paid his gaming and other debts, for Bruno had not yet received his sister's fortune, as the body had not been found. It was not till next year—that is, five years after her death—that he would be allowed to take legal possession of it.

"Yes, dear Bruno," at last said Arabella, who was deeply pained by her husband's position. "You'd better go by yourself. Leave Fitz here with us. Eberhard has grown so used to him, that he doesn't care to play with any one else."

Bruno repaired to the apothecary's, where he was informed that the meadow belonged to the freeholder who lived at several hours' distance. He started for the farm at once.

Walpurga was sitting by the window, and playing with the child in her lap, when she saw a horseman approaching. She involuntarily raised her hand to her eyes and leaned back, as if he were going to ride straight over her.

She saw him dismount and saw Hansei greet him and lead the horse to the stable; after that, Hansei and the stranger came into the room.

"God greet you, Count!" said Walpurga, composing

herself and advancing toward him. "How kind of you, to pay us a visit."

She extended her hand to Bruno, who went on twisting his mustache, and did not offer his hand in return.

"Ah! it's you, is it? I didn't know that you were the mistress here. And so this is the farm that you paid for with gold? You're shrewd, but don't be alarmed. I shan't call you to account!"

Hansei observed that his wife was growing pale.

"Who is this man? Who is it that talks to you in this high and mighty manner?" he asked, drawing himself up.

"Be quiet!" said Walpurga. "He is one of the court gentlemen and is fond of joking."

"That's it, is it?" muttered Hansei. "I want to say a word to you, sir—what may your name be?"

"Count Wildenort."

"Well then, Count, I didn't ask who you were, and I bade you and your horse welcome. And now I'd like you to tell me what you want and leave my wife alone. In my house and home, I allow no jokes that don't please me, and if the king himself were to come and try a joke that I didn't like, I'd put him out! No offense, but every one must say what he thinks. Now, sir, take a seat."

Hansei put on his hat and pressed it down firmly, as if to show that he was master here.

Bruno said, with a smile:

"You've a good husband, Walpurga."

"That'll do," said Hansei, interrupting him. "What do you wish, Count?"

"Nothing out of the way. They tell me you have a shepherd's hut on your mountain meadow, and I hear it is the finest in all the Highlands."

"Yes, yes," said Hansei, grinning. "It isn't so bad and it's very nicely situated; but I won't sell it."

"I don't want to buy it. All I want is to spend the day up there."

"Why, how do you mean?"

"Are there good roads leading to it, and is the place clean? Is there a chance of coming back without bringing a herd along on one's body?"

"You're right, Walpurga, he's quite funny," whispered Hansei to his wife, and then, turning to Bruno, he said:

"The roads are good, and if you don't mind going an hour's distance out of the way, you can ride almost to the very spot. I can show you the way up if you wish it."

"Certainly; my wife and mother-in-law would like to see the place."

Walpurga was alarmed at the danger that threatened Irma, but quickly collecting herself she said, as if jesting:

"No, Count; women can't go up there. Such as we are can do it, of course; but, even then, we have to turn our petticoats into breeches." She laughed heartily, and Bruno laughed, too. He imagined his mother-in-law in this costume. She had tried many in her life, but never such an one.

The only object of his errand had been to enable him, under the pretext of having received authentic information, to dissuade his mother-in-law from her plan which, if carried out, would have subjected him to a day of bitter slavery. He well knew that nothing would be right, and that he would be obliged to swallow her reproaches and scoldings, just as if it were his fault that they chanced now upon a swamp, now upon a hill, and that while, at the shepherd's hut, they might feed their eyes on mountains of ice, they could not have vanilla ices with which to satisfy the palate. He knew all about these pleasure-parties, at which he generally felt as if he must die of vexation. Walpurga found an opportunity to tell her husband to use all the means in his power to dissuade the count from visiting their mountain meadow. And so when Hansei went out into the stable with the count, who was looking for his horse, he laughed till he showed every tooth in his head while he said:

"There's a relation of ours up there, and she's a little bit out of her mind."

Walpurga also came out into the stable, for she feared that her husband might betray something. Bruno asked her whether she knew what had become of her friend.

Walpurga shook her head and wept.

"Yes," said she, "I can well say no one on this earth suffered more for her sake than I did."

She wept so bitterly that Bruno offered to console her. At last he left.

It was several days before Walpurga recovered from the effects of her fright. Again and again, it seemed to her that it might be better if Irma were found out, for perhaps she was quite ill and might die before her time. But if she were discovered, it would kill her at once. This accounted for her uneasiness, while at the hut on the previous Sunday, and for her having enjoined the greatest caution on the uncle. She was constantly pursued by the thought that there would soon be an end to it all. If one only knew how and what the end would be, and whether anything could be done. She could do nothing. All she could do was to let what would happen.

CHAPTER XI.

THE trees in Gunther's garden were decked with green and the parterre was filled with lovely flowers. The birds were singing, and the forest stream that flowed through the grounds murmured as if regretful at being obliged to leave the spot so soon.

Within doors all was joy and happiness. Bronnen and Paula were betrothed. The love that had calmly grown and ripened, now suddenly burst forth in all its glory. Bronnen wished to call Paula his own, before the arrival of the court, so that she might then feel less constrained and have an opportunity to accustom herself to the manners of the court circle. It was not without fear that Madame Gunther thought of her child entering the stirring life of the capital, a life of which she had an unconquerable dread. Bronnen told the doctor and his wife that he had found it easier to bring about reform in politics than in court etiquette. It had hitherto been a time-honored and unalterable custom that wives of the citizen class could not be presented at court, no matter what their husbands' rank might be. He had not been able to effect a change in this until he had made it a cabinet question. Gunther smiled at this explanation. He knew how stubbornly etiquette resisted all attempts at innovation. Madame Gunther, on the other hand, was quite alarmed

at the idea that, both at court and at the capital, Paula would be the first lady after the queen. She would have been far better pleased if Bronnen's position had been an humbler one; but she loved him with a maternal affection that expressed itself in her every glance. She even went so far that Gunther smilingly remarked: "You've become disloyal to your own country,—" for she had asserted that a man so noble, so dignified, and yet both firm and yielding in character, could only be developed under a monarchical government. "In a republic," said she, "there is a certain want of form and indulgence of personal inclinations. The self-respect which never fails in the respect due to others was the peculiar fruit of courts, and Bronnen had one talent which was especially calculated to place every one at ease while with him. He was a good listener, and was always willing to wait attentively until you had finished what you wanted to say."

The joy of the parents was, however, but a mild reflection of that of the betrothed. After Paula had, in all sincerity, confessed her fear that she might fail to satisfy a man like Bronnen, she soon became calm again, for she felt that there is a depth of love which, including all that is highest on earth, embraces enduring happiness. The lovers roamed through field and forest, and Bronnen was again and again reminded of the pure and radiant sentiments which the refined and elevated atmosphere of her home had firmly established in Paula. With every new chord that he touched, he struck a rich store of thought and found her gifted with an impressible and receptive mind. He rejoiced in the destiny which had thus directed his choice, and in the conviction that all individual improvement is achieved and perfected by mutual effort.

Madame Gunther was with her husband in his study, and would, now and then, look out of the window at the lovers, who were walking in the garden.

"Bronnen made a strange confession to Paula and me yesterday," said she. "If another had told me of it, I would not have believed it."

"What was it?"

"He told us, with a voice full of emotion, that he had once loved Countess Wildenort. Did you know of it?"

"No, but I can't find anything wrong in it. If she only could have controlled her impulses, she would have been worthy of the best of men, and my dear Eberhard deserved to have such a man for his son."

"Tell me," asked Madame Gunther, "I've never found the slightest thing to object to in him, but do you think it right of him to tell Paula of this? It will make her still more anxious; she will compare herself with the brilliant countess, and—"

"Don't let that trouble you," said Gunther, interrupting her; "a heart which, like our child's, is conscious of the full power of love, possesses an inexhaustible fund of happiness which no rival, be she ever so great and brilliant, can disturb. If it were possible, I would think even more of him than I now do, for having told her of this. It is not every man who is so fortunate as I have been, and whose first love is his only love. Most of us are obliged to pass through disappointment and loss, and he who, like Bronnen, has come out of the ordeal, pure and unscathed, may praise his lot. The more I regard the world from a distance, as it were, the greatest misfortune which has befallen mankind is, that a life soiled by vice should go on parallel with that which is termed regular and domestic, creating discord among men, as well as in the individual mind. If the race is to be saved, a great revolution must take place in the minds of men. We have watched over our child so long and so faithfully that, in spite of all worldly happiness, it would deeply grieve me to see her bestow her hand on a man who, according to the counterfeit expression coined by society, has led a fast life."

Madame Gunther regarded her husband with a look of unspeakable joy. "I find that Bronnen has converted you from your aversion to the military profession," she said, in a soft voice.

"By no means," replied Gunther, "but Bronnen has not been injured by it. With resolute courage and an easy sway over others, he combines a deep and earnest mind. It is almost miraculous that, just when I desire to produce in my work the image of a pure and active man of the present day, the very traits I seek are found in the

man who, in the free course of nature, is to belong to me. It seems as if mysterious agencies provided us with that which the poetic eye endeavors to portray to itself. Bronnen seems as if stepping forth from my work."

Gunther had never before spoken thus of his work. "Don't misunderstand me," he added; "I do not look upon any one as representing the ideal of perfect manhood, but I can find some traits in every one, and many of them in Bronnen. Humanity, as I find it in the actual world, is filled with beauty; but, in truth, it is still more beautiful, and I am glad to think that the next generation will be better than our own. And yet we may truly say that the good we have achieved, lives on with them. Their enthusiasm will be less than ours, but their moderation will render it more enduring. But I do not care to go too far into this subject, at present. All I wanted to say was, that the feeling of discord, in modern times, arises from the fact that religion has exalted faith above morals, that art has pursued a similar course with beauty, and politics with freedom. And yet they are one and inseparable, and must ever remain so. I trust that I may yet be able to make this clear to the world, and thus contribute somewhat to the union of true piety, beauty and freedom, with the morality which is, at present, so graciously tolerated."

Their conversation was interrupted, for Count von Wildenort, his wife and mother-in-law were announced. The servant was instructed to ask them to the garden saloon, and, shortly afterward, the visitors, Gunther and his wife, Bronnen and his betrothed, were engaged in lively conversation. Madame Gunther confined her attentions to the young countess, who had greatly improved under Gunther's treatment, while Baroness Steigeneck engaged the lovers in conversation. Madame Gunther would often look at Bronnen and Paula as if she would fain brush away a caterpillar crawling over them. Bruno addressed Gunther quite cheerfully, and told him that during the royal visit he would probably return by command of their majesties. This may have been intended as a hint to Gunther to bring about such an order, for the baroness, greatly annoyed by her exclusion from court,

intended to return to her castle, with her children and grandchildren, and then to visit some fashionable watering-place. She was eager to reach the gaming-table.

They were quite long in taking their leave, and expressed their gratitude for the pleasures they had enjoyed during their stay, as well as their envy of those who could live here, as on some happy island. At last they stepped into their carriage and drove off.

After the visitors had left, Madame Gunther opened all the windows, in order that a current of fresh air might carry away the strong perfumes of the baroness.

Bronnen left the same evening. The family accompanied him for a short distance. He and Paula walked in front, Gunther and his wife behind. The empty carriage followed after them, and Bronnen did not enter it until he had taken leave of his friends. The parting was simple and affectionate. They were full of the joyful memories of the day just past, and looked forward to future happy days, for Bronnen intended to return with the king.

On the way home, Paula walked between her parents, her cheeks glowing with excitement. Gunther, however, left his wife and daughter before reaching home, for he was obliged to repair to Count Wildenort's lodgings, in order to give further directions to his wife.

Mother and daughter went on alone, and when Madame Gunther looked at her daughter, she saw that a silent tear was in her eye, although her face was radiant with joy.

"You have a right to feel happy," said Madame Gunther, "you will have a husband fit to be compared to your father. I can wish you nothing better than to enjoy such happiness as has been mine, and that the joy I have had in my children, and in you especially, may some day be yours."

"Ah mother!" said Paula, "I can't realize how I could let him go away alone, nor, on the other hand, that I am to leave you and father and sister. But Bronnen—she always mentioned him by his surname—"says that he hopes father will again return to the capital; that he might select any post he pleases, for the king wishes it."

"I don't think your father will consent. But let noth-

ing of that kind distress you, my dear child. You may well be happy, for your happiness is shared by us.

Before reaching home, they saw several beautiful horses and carriages sent in advance of the queen, whose arrival was expected within the next few days. The highway had suddenly become full of life, and the little town was filled with wondering and delighted crowds. The court was coming, and to Gunther they were indebted for all this. The wife and daughter were respectfully greeted by all whom they met, and, even in the distance, one could see the townsfolk pointing them out to the recently arrived court servants, who also greeted them quite obsequiously.

Further on, they met a vehicle which seemed as if it belonged to fairyland. Two tiny bay ponies, with short-clipped black manes and gay trappings, were harnessed to a little, low-wheeled carriage. As if divining what was going on, the children appeared at the farmhouses and rushed across the meadows and fields, to admire the crown prince's fairy-like equipage, and followed it through the town, where the crowd of joyous, shouting children grew larger and larger, until they at last reached the dairy-farm.

Paula looked on with a smile. She stopped with her mother before a house, the signboard on which announced that it was the new telegraph office. Here, thought she to herself, the messages she would send, and those she would receive after leaving her paternal home, would pass.

The telegraph poles which Irma had seen the workmen putting up near the farm, had been erected on account of the queen's intended summer sojourn in the neighborhood.

Early on the following morning, the first telegram reached the little town. It was addressed to Paula and was as follows:

"I dedicate the electric spark to the service of love. I am well, and send greetings to you, your father, mother and sister.

"BRONNEN."

CHAPTER XII.

THE school children were ranged under the fruit-trees on either side of the road. Bells were ringing, music resounding, cannon firing, and the rugged mountains echoed back the merry din.

It was the queen's entry.

She sat in an open carriage drawn by four white horses. The prince, a boy with golden hair and fresh complexion, sat by her side. The carriage stopped at the boundary line. A maiden dressed in the becoming costume of the country, welcomed the queen in a poem of the school-master's composition, and presented her with a bouquet of Alpine flowers. The queen graciously accepted the bouquet. She bowed in all directions and held out her hand to the child. The prince followed her example, saying in a voice loud enough to be heard by the town council and all the catholic and evangelical ministers present: "God greet you!"

Cheers resounded again and again, and their path was strewn with flowers.

The queen drove through the little town, which was decorated with flags and garlands. On her arrival, she found that the court cavaliers who had preceded her were in waiting, and that Gunther was among them. For the first time since his return, he wore the marks of the various grand orders to which he belonged. After passing under a triumphal arch, the carriage stopped and the queen alighted.

She held out her hand to Gunther, who would gladly have kissed it; but he turned to the prince and kissed him. He was so agitated that he could not speak a word. At last he said:

"I bid Your Majesty welcome to my home!"

"Wherever you are, there is home," replied the queen.

She passed, leading her boy by the hand.

Countess Brinkenstein, Lady Constance, and other court ladies, also exchanged greetings with Gunther. There were others, however, who were more recently appointed and whom Gunther did not know.

The queen and her immediate suite soon reached the great terrace, which commanded a delightful view of mountain and valley. Gunther pointed out the direction of the mountain range and the intervening valleys. He also told her the names of the principal peaks and would, here and there, add a few items of historical interest. He was presenting the chiefs of his native home to the queen. Evening soon set in and the lofty heights were bathed in the warm hues of the glorious sunset. They were silent for a few moments, while they gazed up at the heights, and little did they think of her who had been dreamily looking thence out into the wide world, and who had just been startled by the echo of the gun from the neighboring cliffs. There must be some joyous feast going on down there, she thought, and she who had once moved among this circle, and had not been the least admired in it, lived within herself, in silence and solitude.

It seemed as if the whole population of the town and the outlying neighborhood had gathered at the park railing, in order to catch a glimpse of the queen. All that pertained to her, be it her horses, her carriages, or her servants, inspired them with wonder and admiration.

At the sound of the evening bell, the men took off their hats and, after a silent prayer, all proceeded homeward.

It was soon night. The party had dispersed, and the queen asked Gunther if there was not some way to get to his house without going through the town. Gunther replied that the king had had a path made around the hill.

The queen looked down. The king's thoughtful care pleased her. Had he been present at that moment, she would have spoken to him more kindly than she had done for many a day.

"I should like to visit your family," said the queen.

"I shall have the honor of bringing them to Your Majesty to-morrow."

"The evening is so charming; let us go to them now."

The queen, attended by Gunther and numerous ladies and gentlemen of the court, took the new path that led to the doctor's dwelling.

"Had you not better send word to your ladies that the queen is about to visit them?" said Countess Brinken-

stein to Gunther. Although the laws of etiquette were sometimes relaxed during her visit to the country, the informal manner in which the queen set about paying this visit seemed opposed to all rules.

Gunther graciously declined following out her suggestion.

He was proudly conscious of the fact that, at whatever time the queen and her suite might enter his house, they would find his wife, his house and his children prepared to receive them.

Clever Stasi, the inspector's wife, had, however, heard where they were going, and hurried to tell Madame Gunther who was coming.

When the visitors arrived, the garden saloon was brilliantly lighted and, at the garden gate, they were met by Madame Gunther, who was attended by both of her daughters. Their reception of the queen was respectful and reverential, although it may not have been strictly in accordance with that prescribed by court forms.

"I could not wait," said the queen.—Her voice seemed clearer and brighter than before.—"I felt that I must see you to-day and offer you my congratulations. You, I presume, are the affianced of Minister Bronnen?" said she, addressing Paula.

Paula bowed so correctly that Countess Brinkenstein could not repress a nod of approval. The queen extended her hand to Paula and kissed her on the forehead.

"I shall now see you often," she added, "and it will be pleasant to remember that I've known you in your home."

She beckoned Madame Gunther to draw near, and, accompanied by her, walked about the garden.

"And so I see you to-day, for the first time," said the queen. "I trust that you do not look upon me as a stranger?"

"Your Majesty, it is the first time in my life that I address a queen, and I entreat you—"

"Your husband has been as a father to me, and I wish that you, too — But let us leave it to the future to determine our impressions of each other. Permit me, however, to request you to cast aside a little of your Swiss prejudice against royalty."

"Your Majesty, I am a citizen of your country."

"I am delighted that our first meeting is in your own house. Do you still sing much? I've been told that you used to sing beautifully."

"Your Majesty, I've left that to the younger voices of my children. Paula sings."

"How charming! I have long regretted that none of the ladies of our more immediate circle sing well."

Like a passing shadow, the thought of Irma flashed through the queen's mind. She was standing by the stream that flowed down from the mountain meadow, and which here noisily rushed by.

The queen remained in the pavilion but a short time. When she was about to leave, she said to Madame Gunther:

"Will you not accompany me part of the way?"

"No, I thank Your Majesty."

"Then I shall see you to-morrow. Good-night. Let us be good neighbors."

The queen left.

Gunther well knew how the ladies of the court would discuss his wife's great breach of decorum in declining to comply with the queen's expressed wish. But he did not say a word to his wife about it, for he knew that he could permit her to have her own way. He felt sure that she would always do what was right, and that, if she did disregard certain conventionalities, she would nevertheless manage everything for the best. Indeed, the very fact of her having gently repelled the queen's exceedingly gracious advances, was doubly reassuring to him.

"I am glad," said Madame Gunther to her husband, when they were together in the drawing-room, "that Paula becomes introduced to court life while yet in her father's house. The queen really impresses me as a noble creature."

Gunther assented, and added that Paula had already proven how well she had profited by Bronnen's advice. For Bronnen had told her that, in order to be free at court, one must make its trifling forms a sort of second nature, so that they can be practiced without special stress or difficulty; and that, in fact, they must be

mastered just as one masters the grammar of his native tongue.

In the silent moonlight night, Paula was heard singing, with full voice and passionate expression, the concluding verses of the song of Goethe's, the song that Bronnen admired above all others:

Crown of existence,
Joy without rest,
Love art thou.

On yonder heights, whither no voice from below reached, there sat a solitary one, and through her mind there passed a song of the same master's—the song of songs, in which the soul is freed from all its burdens, and is again united with enduring nature:

O'er hill and dale,
Thy splendor falls ;
No longer care
My heart enthalls.

The court ladies at the dairy-farm kept up their talk until a late hour. Those who had not been permitted to accompany the queen envied the others, who had enjoyed an early opportunity of meeting Bronnen's affianced. What could there have been in the citizen's daughter to tempt Bronnen, who might have had the hand of the highest in the land? Some pronounced her awkward, others too confident, and doubts were expressed as to her beauty. The younger ladies were jokingly informed that, for many days to come, Doctor Gunther would have a parade of sentiment and universal ideas, and this, too, *au grand sérieux*.

The moon shone brightly on the mountains and the valleys. Everything was hushed in slumber. The only sounds heard were the gurgling of the springs, the murmuring of the stream and, now and then, a mountain cry from the heights above.

A bright day dawned.

Gunther visited the queen at an early hour. For the next few weeks, he had determined to sacrifice his quiet mornings. He was quite willing to devote himself entirely

to his friend, and looked forward to a resumption of his wonted employments, after her departure.

He was again sitting on the terrace, as he had been one morning five years ago; but this time, instead of looking at the distant mountains, he was surrounded by them, and, as she had then done, the queen now again appeared in a white morning robe and greeted him. But her whole being had changed; her step was freer, her words more decided.

"We shall make no programme of what we intend to do here," said she, as she walked up and down the garden with Gunther; "we'll take life as it comes."

She told him how pleased she was to have made the acquaintance of his wife and daughters, and that she thought he had done wisely, while at the capital, in keeping his home life and his life at court, as far as possible, distinct from each other. Memories of Irma again seemed to cast a passing shadow over the bright morning, for the queen well knew that Gunther had introduced her to his family. It seemed as if the memory of Irma were not yet fully banished and buried.

"I trust Your Majesty will, nevertheless, permit me to draw up a little programme," said Gunther. "It has but one paragraph. Permit me to explain it. I've never been able to express myself in writing on this matter. I can only do so in person. I have to accuse myself of having done you a great wrong."

"You? A great wrong?"

"Yes, and it relieves me to confess it to you. Your Majesty, I do not inquire as to your present relations with your royal consort. The fact that he has prepared all this for you, and the manner in which it has been done, proves his delicate feeling."

"And I admit it willingly, but still I cannot—"

"I am obliged to interrupt you, Your Majesty, for that which I request of you is that we shall never more speak of your relations to his majesty. Long ago, when you were torn by an inner struggle, I believed that if I could only induce you to encourage freer and more liberal views, a clearer mental vision would better enable you to be just toward others, and would be followed by

returning love. And it was just there that I was wrong, for I offended against a simple but fundamental principle: feelings cannot be governed by thought. And were it otherwise, the interference of a third party should always be rejected. The attempted mediator only widens the breach. Husband and wife can alone repair it. And now, Your Majesty, let us speak no more of this matter, for thus only can we, without feeling embarrassed, meet each other, or the king himself. Your own heart is your only confidant. Follow its dictates, and do not be frightened back by any apparent alienation or change of feeling! Will you grant me the favor I ask?"

"Yes. And now not another word on the subject."

They conversed freely and cheerfully, as if they had both laid aside a burden which had heavily rested upon them.

The crown prince was brought in. Gunther was delighted with his healthy appearance, and promised him a playmate who was born on the same day as himself.

"Mamma, why haven't I a little sister?" asked the crown prince.

The color rose to the queen's cheeks.

"Little Cornelia is to be your sister," she replied, and gave orders that they should take the prince to visit the child at the doctor's house.

Gunther's parting instructions to Madame von Gerloff were that the children should be shown the bird's nest in the rosebush. The prince asked permission to take Schnipp and Schnapp with him, and the two children were soon driving through the valley in the pretty little carriage, a little groom managing the horses and a little outrider in front. At noon, Madame Gunther and her daughters visited the queen. Little by little, a common interest in their pleasures, aided by the invigorating influences of nature, helped to bring about a uniform tone of feeling, and thus to level distinctions which would be more closely observed in city circles.

The days sped by pleasantly. The queen felt no craving for unwonted pleasures; and every hour was complete in itself.

The queen, one day, told Madame Gunther that she

was the first citizen's wife with whom she had been on terms of familiar intimacy, and that she could not help admiring her clear, good sense.

"I must tell you something of my youth," replied Madame Gunther, to whom this condescending praise was quite a surprise.

"Pray do so," said the queen, encouragingly.

"Your Majesty, I was betrothed and happy. Wilhelm was traveling during his vacation and we often wrote to each other. One day, I received a letter from him which offended my pride and, indeed, deeply wounded me. I had indulged in excessive sensibility and, in reply, he quoted the words of Lessing which Nathan addresses to the Knight Templar: 'Mediocrity, like ours, can be found in abundance everywhere!'"

"And did that offend you?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; it offended me deeply. Gunther is without a trace of that false modesty which is all the more vain, the more modest it appears. He stood so high in my esteem that I felt he had, by using this expression, committed an offense against himself and, I may confess it, against myself, as well. I did not regard myself as mediocre, but as a highly gifted being. But from that time, I began to perceive that most suffering arises from the fact that those who have understanding, culture, and some talent, regard themselves as belonging to a higher order of beings, privileged to disregard ordinary barriers and to step beyond their allotted sphere of duty. To acknowledge myself as mediocre and to shape my own actions, and my judgment of others, accordingly, has ever been my rule in life; and I must beg Your Majesty to regard me in the same way. There are thousands of women like me. It is just as it is in singing. I've sung in a chorus, and know there are many good voices who never aspire to solos."

The queen was silent. The words which Madame Gunther had uttered in perfect sincerity, might be applied in so many different ways—to herself, to the king, and to her who was still unforgotten.

At last she looked up frankly.

"I have a request to make of you," she said, with fal-

tering voice, while she took out a breastpin with a large pearl. "Oblige me by accepting this memento of this hour and of the truth which you have just imparted to me."

"Your Majesty," replied Madame Gunther, "I have never in all my life, accepted a present of this kind. But I can easily understand that you, as a queen, are accustomed to experience the joy of bestowing gifts on others and of thus making them happy. I accept it as a symbol, as if it were an unfading flower from your garden."

Madame Gunther wended her way homeward in a calm and contented mood. When she arrived before the house, she suddenly stopped. The windows of the large drawing-room were open. Some one was playing the piano with powerful, masterly touch and expression. It could not be Paula. Who could it be?

Madame Gunther's nephew, the young man whose song Irma had sung years before, and who, on a previous visit to his relatives, had sought the freeholder's dwelling as a refuge from the storm, and had there met Irma without knowing who she was, had now, as had been foretold him, become totally blind. He had become a master of the piano, and bore his sad fate with manly fortitude. The meeting between Madame Gunther and her nephew was deeply affecting.

That evening, she introduced him to the queen, who, as her first act of friendship to the doctor's wife, appointed him "pianist to the queen." All that remained was to submit the appointment to the approval of the king, who was expected to arrive in a few days.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE king had arrived during the night. In order to avoid the pomp of a reception, he came unannounced. He regarded himself as a guest of the queen, for whom alone he had ordered the preparation of this modest summer retreat.

On the following morning, Gunther, decorated with his orders, repaired to the farm.

He felt that the tone of their little circle must suffer a change by the advent of any new-comer, even if possessed of a more yielding disposition than that of the king.

Gunther had not seen the king since he waited upon him to thank him for the order he had conferred upon him. He was composed. One point in favor of court forms is that they are fixed and unalterable, as well as independent of passing moods.

Gunther's path led along the slope of a projecting hill, and, on the way, his thoughts involuntarily recurred to Eberhard. The early hour, the mountain air, and the close-fitting uniform—all were just as they had been years ago.

Eberhard had always maintained that unmeaning politeness is only disguised rudeness. He required that every word and act should come from the depths of one's soul, and that, at every moment, life should be truthful. During the years he had spent in solitude, Gunther came to perceive that the concessions he had made to his surroundings had, to a certain extent, involved failure to comply with this precept. He now found his greatest happiness in being perfectly truthful toward himself and the world, and for this reason, in the work in which he expected to sum up the results of his life, he had expressed his feelings without reserve or disguise.

When his eye fell on the farmhouse, he paused to collect his thoughts. He was about to pay his respects to the man who had endeavored to degrade him.

The king stood at the open window and, when he saw Gunther approach, was greatly agitated. If the dignity that befits kings had not forbidden it, he would gladly have called out a welcome to the man whom he esteemed so highly; and if kingly dignity requires this much, it also possesses one great advantage—for while he who desires admittance still waits, he who grants it maintains his natural freedom, or, in other words, is at home while the other is as a stranger.

Gunther sent in his name, and was at once admitted. The king advanced to meet him, and said:

“Welcome, my dear privy councilor! I am heartily glad—” He faltered at the words and, as if changing his

mind, added: "I am delighted to have an opportunity to wish you joy! One scarcely knows whether to say that you deserve such a son as Minister Bronnen or that he deserves such a father as you. It's all the same, I suppose," he concluded, with a smile which seemed somewhat forced.

"I humbly thank Your Majesty—" Gunther also hesitated, for it was a long while since he had used this phrase—"for the interest you have graciously manifested in me and mine."

The king and Gunther met under changed and mutually embarrassing circumstances, and congratulations on Bronnen's engagement seemed to afford a convenient subject of conversation. It was, nevertheless, followed by a pause, in which the two men, who had been separated for two years, eyed each other as if each would again impress his memory with the features which, for many years, he had seen almost daily. Gunther had changed but little. His beard was short, thick, and of a snowy white. The king's figure was fuller than it had been. His face wore a deep and earnest expression which harmonized with his winning and amiable deportment. His movements seemed to have gained, rather than lost, in elasticity and vigor.

"I hear," said the king, resuming the conversation, "that you are engaged on a great philosophical work, and I feel that we have reason to congratulate ourselves thereat, for that will afford us an opportunity to enjoy those fruits of your thought which, in our daily intercourse, we are now deprived of."

"Your Majesty, I am reviewing my life and striking a balance. In some respects, there is more, in others, less than I had reason to hope for. I live within myself, and am happy to think that, when I look out into the world, I can perceive that those who are called for great purposes can show a clear balance sheet."

"Growth is slow," said the king. "While driving through the fields yesterday, I thought to myself: how long it takes before the blade of corn becomes the ripened ear. We cannot see how much it grows with each day. We can only note the result."

Smiling, and perfectly unconstrained, he added: "I am

imparting my latest observations to you. It seems—it seems—as though it were but yesterday, since we last met. Let us go into the garden."

On the way, the king asked: "How do you find the prince?"

"He has a well-built frame and, as far as I can judge, his mental development is normal and healthy."

In consequence of the long years of separation and the lingering feeling of reserve, there were frequent breaks in the conversation.

"You have again been living among the people," said the king, "and has your experience satisfied you that the popular mind (or, in other words, popular simplicity in thought and manners) is the divinely appointed corrective of the errors of a higher civilization?"

Gunther looked up as if amazed. Was the question an idle one, or did a deeper significance underlie it? Had the king not succeeded in conquering his dislike of popular verdicts? Or did he—as a proof of returning royal favor—merely intend to afford the man whom he had so deeply injured, an opportunity to gratify his vanity by ventilating his opinions?

Quick as lightning, these thoughts flashed through his mind. After a short pause, he replied:

"With Your Majesty's permission, let me, before proceeding to answer you, state the question more distinctly."

"Pray do so."

A pause ensued, just as if they were trying and tuning inner instruments which, coming from unequal temperatures, had not yet been brought into harmony with each other; for although both men were calm and self-controlled, their moods were not in accord.

"If by the term 'popular mind,' you mean those views and states of feeling which are not based upon scientific laws or art traditions, but which seem as fixed and unchangeable as the forces of nature; and if, on the other hand, you apply the term 'corrective' to that which separates us from all that is alien or effete, and leads us, as it were, back to nature—I am prepared to answer your question as well as I know how."

"I am entirely satisfied with the form in which you put

the question," replied the king. "I often think that discussions are barren of results, simply because the question was vaguely or imperfectly stated at the start."

Gunther nodded a smiling approval of these words.

"And now for the answer," asked the king, all attention.

"Although I may seem to wander from the point, I shall soon return to it. The event from which it dates, forms a turning point in the history of mankind. Unlike all that went before, the central figure which later generations have idealized, and from which they have drawn inspiration, was not born on Olympic heights. Jesus was born in a manger, and yet kings performed pious pilgrimages to the spot. The fact that the Spirit which is innate with the pure man, could even be born in a manger, among the dumb animals devoted to domestic use, is an enduring proof of pure democracy, or of nobility in that which is lowly. If, however, the manger were, henceforth, to be regarded as alone holy, or the forms and surroundings of popular life be accepted as the only abode of the eternal spirit, or the embodiment of holy nature itself, it would be a perversion of truth, a new orthodoxy, another schism. This much always remains; the spirit of truth appears everywhere—in the manger and in the pillared temple, in the library of the student and on the royal throne in the glittering palace. Buddha, who was one of the greatest benefactors and regenerators of mankind, and who, in the realm of caste, maintained the equality of human rights, was the son of a king.

"And now to return to the question. Whenever a form of civilization has attained its highest development and begins to show its defects, the idea of complete revolution suggests itself. None but violent methods are thought of, and, while the only object to be gained is the bringing about of regeneration, by means of strata which have not yet been exhausted, and which bring new strength to bear, it is deemed necessary to go back to the beginning of all things. But the lower strata cannot, of themselves, effect this regeneration. What is required of them is to be constantly sending fresh strength to those above them. The great masses, considered as such, cannot renew civili-

zation. All that they can do is to furnish new material. It is only in a limited sense that the masses are the bearers of the spirit of the people. Individual men, who have ever preserved their childlike simplicity of soul, just as they received it from nature, and through subsequent development have retained it unimpaired, will now and then rise from among the masses. But the scientific spirit must be united with this childlike feeling, and then an epoch, or an individual, forms a node by which this development is not interrupted but from which it seems to take a new start, forming, as it were, a new growth on the old stem. It is not the people, as a mass, but a certain man or circle that concentrates the spirit of the people within itself, and renews the same individually."

"Is not that aristocracy?" asked the king, in a soft, almost hesitating voice.

"Your Majesty, I dread no term or idea that seems to be the result of logical consistency. Call it an aristocracy, if you will, but it is a democratic one, ever renewing itself. For those who, from generation to generation, represent the spirit of the people, are not taken from the same sphere."

"I understand," said the king, stopping in front of a rosebush. "It is just as here, where every year brings forth new shoots that bear the roses. But pardon me, I interrupted you!"

"I have only to add," said Gunther, "that while the masses, considered as such, are the bearers of civilization, the highest development of this civilization is brought about by the few who are called and chosen for the task. To make my meaning clearer: He who is of average size, is not tall, and he who possesses general culture has naught that distinguishes or elevates him above the rest."

"But who measures and passes upon such claims to such distinction?" asked the king.

"In science and art, it is the sense of being called to do certain things, the individual impulse and energy that give shape to ideas which others have only imperfectly conceived, and which, when they have once found utterance, the masses gladly accept as their own. In state affairs, this call is conveyed by means of elections, which

have never before obtained to the same extent as at present. It is of great advantage that the occasional call to vote is opposed, or rather, held in check, by the call which is founded on historic claims. But, whenever the latter fails to be at one with the former, it mistakes its strength, and at last falls."

The king walked on in silence, his eyes bent on the ground. Everything tended to prove that there is a united mind, or totality of thought, which is and must be more powerful than any individual mind. There was no longer the faintest suspicion that this conclusion was the result of an idle question.

Although the king walked on in silence, the break in the conversation was not caused by an unresolved dissonance, jarring his soul's depths.

He was lost in thought, for he had learned how to make a new truth his own by reflection, instead of dismissing it with light and trifling conversation.

"May I ask," said the king, in a voice that betokened great diffidence—"may I ask whether the views which you have just imparted to me, and which have furnished me with much food for future thought, are to be more fully expounded in the work on which you are now employed?"

"Certainly, Your Majesty."

"Then allow me, at once, to pass to a question that concerns our little life and that portion of history which we are to help make."

The king folded his arms and continued:

"Let me be frank with you. You have refused the position of Minister of Education offered you by Minister Bronnen. I can well imagine that you do not care to sacrifice science to the labors of a bureau. Would you perhaps prefer—excuse me," said the king, with an unconstrained smile, "excuse me for using your favorite expression, I did it quite unawares—might I offer you the position of President of the Academy?"

"I humbly request Your Majesty not to consider me as ungrateful, but I have determined never again to enter the busy world. Besides that—Your Majesty knows that I have no false modesty—I frankly acknowledge that my

long continued attention to work of a practical nature has, to so great an extent, prevented me from keeping up my scientific studies, that I could not do justice to the position so graciously offered me. I beg Your Majesty to permit me to spend the rest of my life in retirement. I have become an author and desire to remain one."

"I should willingly accord you perfect liberty to express your sentiments regardless of consequences."

"I know that very well, Your Majesty, and at once avail myself of it by telling you that liberty which is accorded us is not perfect liberty. In any elevated position under the state, I would be obliged to respect Your Majesty's wishes and also to have regard to my son's position. I entreat you, therefore, to permit me to be an author and remain one; nothing more."

The king's features betrayed his displeasure. He had done his utmost, had shown by deeds how glad he would be to repair the effects of his former hasty conduct, and here again he was met by the obstinacy he had so often encountered. Did the man expect to hear the king say: "I repent; pardon me?"

An angry reply rose to the king's lips, but he checked himself. Gunther quickly saw what was going on, and esteem for the changed being who was now standing before him, made his eye glisten.

The king had not once mentioned the queen's name. He had not, as would have been so natural, asked him who had been her physician for many years, what he thought of her appearance. Gunther was just on the point of mentioning her, when the king, contracting his brows, asked:

"Have you ever committed an act which you repented of?"

"Your Majesty—my name is Wilhelm Gunther. My life has been a hard struggle and I have often stumbled. I have been young and have grown old, and have come to see that all men receive their true deserts."

"And has it proven so in your case?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, I thank you for asking me that question. And now let me confess.—What I am about to say is without the slightest tinge of bitterness. When I regard a fact as accomplished, I have done with it. I

therefore speak of it without embarrassment, just as if I were explaining the operation of some law of nature. Yes, Your Majesty, I have richly deserved all that has happened to me. I was most graciously dismissed from Your Majesty's favor, and it was but just that it should be so."

"That was not what I meant. I had no desire to allude to it. On the contrary—"

"Permit me, Your Majesty, to explain the logical line of justice as I have understood it. Under deeply painful circumstances, I misconceived my duty as a man, as the friend and servant of Your Majesty."

"You?" asked the king.

"Yes, I! And that I meant it for the best, is no excuse. We all mean to be good, but we have all of us an equal right to be wise. I endeavored to lead the queen to an elevated plain, from which the petty events of life would appear trifling and easily borne. It was a grievous error. It was my duty to avoid all interference, unless I could avert the impending conflict. You acted rightly and, at the same time, benefited the queen by sending me away. Isolated from every influence, even that of a friend, she could not but gain strength as she has done."

A tear glistened in the king's eyes. He pressed his left hand to his heart, as if to repress a thought that he did not care to reveal.

"I am happy," said he at last, "that my life has made me acquainted with such men as you and our dear Bronnen. We only partially make ourselves what we are. Consciously or unconsciously, we are formed by those with whom we associate."

He pressed Gunther's hand in his, and Gunther was happy to feel that the king's heroic self-glorification was completely subdued—the king's confession being a convincing proof of this.

"Papa!" called a boy's voice from the terrace, "papa!"

They turned in the direction from which the voice had come. The queen, surrounded by the ladies and gentlemen of her court, was sitting on the terrace. With anxious eyes, she had followed every movement of the two men. What might they be speaking of? Were these

Elysian days to be disturbed by the old and unforgotten wrong?

And now, when she saw the king take Gunther's hand in his own and hold it for a long while, she embraced the prince, kissed him, and then said:

"Call papa."

The two men turned around and with calm and happy countenances, the sight of which was even more refreshing than that of the beautiful and lofty mountains, came upon the terrace. The king kissed the queen's hand, and, for the first time in years, she pressed it against his lips.

When Gunther was taking his leave, the king said:

"Present my compliments to your wife. I shall pay you a visit to-day, before dinner."

Madame Gunther was amazed when her husband informed her that the king was coming. In spite of all explanations, she could not understand how her husband could thus forgive and forget the injury that had been put upon him—for she could not help looking upon it as an injury and an affront, even though Gunther did not so regard it. For the first time in her life, he was unable to change her opinion. In Gunther's forgiving mood, she thought she detected a spirit of submissiveness which was only possible under a monarchy. Her old republican feelings were aroused.

The king and the queen came. The king found Madame Gunther's behavior shy and reserved. He could not know that she still regarded him with suppressed wrath. Was this the man, and ought there really to be one on earth, who could appoint or dismiss Gunther at will? They were standing by the stream that flowed through the garden, when the king said to Gunther:

"I am told that the crown prince's nurse lives in this neighborhood. Will you not have her come here some time?"

"Her majesty the queen does not wish to see her," replied Gunther.

"Do you know why?"

"It lies in the echo of certain sad memories," replied Gunther; and this passing allusion to Irma was the only time she was mentioned. In the short pause that fol-

lowed these words, the stream murmured louder than before, as if it, too, had something to say.

On the second evening after the king's arrival, Bronnen came, accompanied by the intendant, and found the whole circle happy and complete.

A certain observance of form lent an added charm to country life. With constant freedom, there was yet the protecting presence of the accompanying court circle and servants. Wherever they fixed their resting-place, and wherever they lighted a fire in the forest, for the little prince's amusement, a numerous body of servants was always present, forming a ring to keep off intruding strangers. Paula's manner was calm and composed. Her every movement evinced power and grace. She neither thrust herself forward nor shunned observation. The knowledge that she was in her own home lent charming confidence to her deportment.

During the evening, Gunther's blind nephew, whose appointment as pianist to the queen had been confirmed, played in a masterly manner.

On the following morning he took his first leave of absence, in order, as he said with a smile, to look about the neighborhood and visit old acquaintances.

The king prepared to go hunting.

CHAPTER XIV.

[T was in the morning. Gundel was telling her father how strange cousin Irmgard was. She hardly ever spoke a word; she tasted scarcely anything but a little milk, fresh from the cow: and she seemed so strange. She would lie for hours out on the cliff where she could get a glimpse of the distant lake. The little pitchman was also puzzled by Irma's behavior. For some time past she had done no work, and had given up going with him when he went out to gather herbs.

"I'd like to ask the great doctor down there—the one I fetch the herbs for—what I ought to do," said he, but Walpurga says I shan't. Besides that, I don't see that there's anything the matter with our Irmgard. I

thought of trying something, but I don't know whether it would do any good with a human being. Now if a beast gets sick, all you've got to do is to cut out the sod that he's lying on and turn it, and then the beast will get well again. I wish I knew whether that would help a human being."

"Oh father!" replied Gundel, "that's awful. I'm afraid they'll soon put the sod on our dear Irmgard. She's so good; and when you speak to her it seems as if she has to stop to think of what you're saying, and make up her mind what to answer."

Thus they talked together, and then separated to go about their work for the day, while Irma lay on her blue rug, now looking out at the wide world, now closing her eyes and thinking and dreaming to herself. Her life was a voiceless calm, as if she were part of the animate and inanimate world about her; as if she always had been and ever would remain here: a child of man, to whom no flower, no living thing on earth, nor bird soaring in the air was unknown. The mountains, the clouds, the bright day, the starry night—all were dear and familiar to her.

Irma, as was her wont, was lying on the mossy slope. She gazed into the distance, and then her eyes sought the ground to watch the busy life stirring among the blades of grass and the mosses. Now and then, she would unconsciously raise the mold with her finger and find pine-needles which had accumulated for years and years, and, below them, the *débris* of plants that had been decayed since the world began; hers was the first human eye that rested upon them.

The cows often approached, and grazed near by without disturbing her. She could hear their breathing, and yet did not move. Now and then, the leading cow would stand before her and, with head lifted on high, gaze at the distant landscape. Then it would go on feeding, and, at times, would keep the fodder in its mouth as if it had, while looking at the prostrate form, forgotten that it wanted to eat.

Awake or dreaming, a wonderful life opened up to Irma. The more she rested, the greater was her yearning for rest. Indescribable weariness seemed to have

seized upon her. Work and thought wearied her as they had never done in all the years she had passed in the world. She often tried to arouse herself, but could not. She found a peculiar pleasure in this feeling of heaviness, in this resting on the ground. Hundreds of songs and entire musical works passed through her mind. Myriad thoughts arose and floated away with the light breath of air. Nothing could be seized and retained.

It was hot noonday. The heat was intense. There was not a breath of air, even up among the mountains, and the cows were resting in the shade. Irma had walked out alone. The little pitchman had gone to town to deliver some parcels of herbs. Irma wandered on further and further, and at last reached the source of the brook. She was sitting by the broad basin into which the water fell, and which reflected the dark shadows of the overhanging trees. Irma bent forward and saw her image reflected in the water. It was the first time, in many years, that she had seen it, and she now greeted it with a smile. Not a breath of air was stirring; not a sound was heard.

Irma looked about her, and then, hurriedly undressing herself, plunged into the water. She swam about, dived and rose to the surface again, and a feeling of unexpected delight came over her. Only the sun that shone through the branches for a moment, beheld that wondrous lovely form.

All was silent again. Irma had dressed herself and lay dreamily at the edge of the woods, while sweet melodies passed through her soul.

Suddenly, she heard her name called again and again, and in a loud voice. She answered as loud as she could, and at last Gundel came up and said:

"Irmgard, come to the cottage right away. There's a gentleman there with a servant, and he wants to speak to you."

Irma, who had partly raised herself, lay down again. She felt a heart pang. What could it be? Had her time come? and must she again return to the busy world?

She arose to her feet and asked:

"Don't you know who it is?"

"No, but he says he spent the night with us some years ago. He's a tall, handsome young man; but, poor man, he's stone blind."

"The blind man wandering?" thought Irma to herself, turning toward the hut.

"God greet you!" cried she, while still distant.

"Yes, that's your voice," replied the blind man, stretching out his arms and opening and closing his hands. "Come! Come nearer. Give me your hand!" He quickly drew off his gloves with his teeth, and his face wore a strange expression. Irma drew near and took his delicate, white hand in hers.

"Your hand trembles!" he exclaimed. "Does it frighten you to see me blind?"

Irma could not speak, and nodded as if the blind man could see what she did.

The sun's rays fell directly upon the face of the unfortunate one, and his sightless eyes stared into vacancy.

"You've grown thinner than you were," said the blind man. "May I pass my hand over your face?"

"Yes," replied Irma, closing her eyes.

"You're not as beautiful as you were two years ago. Your eyelids are hot and heavy. You must have been grieving. Can I help you? I'm not rich, but I can still do something."

"Thank you. I've learned to help myself." Being addressed in High German, Irma had involuntarily replied in pure German, without a trace of dialect.

The stranger started, turned his head to the right and left, and, while doing so, stretched out his neck so far that it was almost unpleasant to look at him.

Taking him by the hand, Irma led him to the bench in front of the cottage. She felt a tremor while holding this fine and delicate hand in hers, but, gathering all her strength, she repressed it. She sat down by the blind man, and asked him how he had happened to come there.

"You remember," said he, "that when I was with you last, I knew what my fate would be. I wrestled with myself for a long while and learned to know how to bear it. We know that we must all die, and yet we can be

cheerful; and I knew that I must lose my sight and became cheerful, too."

Irma heaved a deep sigh.

"Do you understand what I mean?" asked the blind man.

"Yes, indeed. Go on, I like to hear your voice."

"I knew it, and that's why I have come to you. I was down at the farm, but they were all out harvesting, and the child's maid told me that you were up here and so I came to you. I walked a good part of this way before, when I was overtaken by the storm, and I can now, in memory, renew the pleasure with which I once beheld these mountains. What I then told you I intended to do, has come to pass. I have all the beautiful landscapes within me. I can see the sparkling sunlight, the brook leaping over the rocks, the sparkling lake, and the trees standing side by side in the peaceful forest. I kept constantly telling my guide where we were. He was quite beside himself to think that I knew it all so well. But the best of it all is that I have beautiful human images in my mind. My greatest desire was to see you once more. I say 'to see you,'—I mean, to hear you speak, but I see you when you speak."

Irma replied, telling him how well she understood and sympathized with him; and when she spoke to him of the difficulty of walking, how the groping foot first seeks the ground before the muscles are straightened to take a step, the blind man asked, with surprise:

"And how do you know that?" He again stretched out his head and bent it back in the same unpleasant manner as before.

"I once knew a blind man who told me. It is terrible to think that you're obliged to depend upon a stranger. Blind Gloster implores his guide not to forsake him."

"Maiden! Who are you? Was it you who spoke? It was your voice—or is there some one with you? How do you know that?"

"I read it once," said Irma, biting her lips till the blood almost came. "'I read it once,'" she repeated, forcing herself to use the dialect again.

The blind man's head bent low and he held his hands

between his knees. A convulsive movement passed over his fine youthful features, as if tears were ineffectually struggling to escape. He leaned his head back against the wall, and at last said:

"So you can read, and so intelligently. Could you—? No, I'll not ask you."

"Ask me what you will. I feel kindly toward you and have often thought of you."

"Did you? You, too?" cried he hurriedly, while he moved his head about in the same strange manner as before. "Maiden!" said he, "give me your hand once more. Tell me, could you give me this hand and let your eyes be mine?"

"Good sir," said Irma, interrupting him, "I should like to feel that your coming here and your going hence were for the best. I think that I can and ought to tell you all. This is the second time I've seen you—"

"I've seen you but once, and yet I shall never forget your face," said the blind man.

"Come with me. I'll lead you, and when we're alone I'll tell you all and prove how grateful I am for your kindness."

"There must be a spot somewhere hereabouts, from which a glimpse of the lake beyond the mountains can be obtained," replied the blind man. "Can you lead me there?"

"Certainly," said Irma, startled at this wonderful inner life. She led him, across the meadow, to the mountain side.

"Sit down here," said she, "and I'll sit beside you. What I am about to tell you is for you alone. Remember, only for you!"

He raised his hand and exclaimed: "I swear!"

"You need no oath," replied Irma. "Know then that I am one who has vanished from the fashionable world. Ask not for my name. Life in all its splendor was mine, and yet I walked in darkness. I was a wretched worldling! I had sunk so low that I sought to destroy myself. If it were only possible, I would gladly fly away with you—just as the birds are flying—through the rosy, golden glow of evening, and vanish into infinite space.

But I've learned to know that life is a duty, and that all we have and are in this world depends upon our finding the world within ourselves and ourselves in the world. You now bear the world within you, where none can take it from you. We can call nothing ours, unless we possess it in that way. And when death comes at last, it takes nothing from us, but simply gives us back to the world—"

"Maiden!" suddenly exclaimed the blind man, "what are you doing? Who are you? No mortal speaks thus! Must I become superstitious? Must I believe in angels? Is there some one with you? Who can it be? Who are you? Give me your hand!"

"Be calm: 'tis I," said Irma, offering him her hand, which he kissed again and again. She withdrew it, and, passing it over his face, said:

"Be calm. I've merely looked out into the world just as you have already done, and while we sit here—two children of the world and yet forgotten by it—we are happy, for we belong to eternity. May you be happy, and may your soul, on wings of music, soar far above all earthly cares. Take my hand once more. Come, let me lead you hence."

Without uttering a word on the way, he suffered Irma to lead him toward the cottage.

When they reached it, he called for his guide and his servant, in a tone of authority.

"Are you going already?" asked Irma.

Leaning on his servant's arm, he left the cottage without answering her.

She again offered him her hand with the words: "The world in us, and ourselves in the world!"

His only reply was a nod, his features again twitched convulsively, as if he were trying to repress his tears.

He had already proceeded as far as the edge of the woods, when he turned around and called out:

"Come here, maiden. I've something to tell you."

She went up to him and he said:

"I'm a nephew of Doctor Gunther, who was formerly physician to the king, and now lives but a short distance from here, in yonder little town. I live with him and am pianist to the queen. If you ever need help, send to me.

or to my uncle. He'll help you, I am sure. But, depend upon it, I shall mention you to no one."

Having said this, he hurriedly turned on his heel and, leaning on his servant, descended the mountain.

Irma remained there, looking after him.

Was Gunther alive? And in her very neighborhood?

And now another being carried her half-disclosed life-secret about with him.

The blind man entered the woods and soon disappeared from view. Irma, with eyes bent on the ground, returned to her resting-place, where she remained gazing into the dim distance until night approached.

Over in the woods she beheld a strange-looking, gray cloud with white, glowing edges. It stood as firmly as if it were a wall. Suddenly, as if exhaled from the earth, a gust of wind arose, so violent that the trees bent under its force.

She hurried toward the cottage, and found that the little pitchman had returned.

"I'm afraid we'll have a storm to-night," said he. "The moon isn't up yet and doesn't rise till late, and that's a sign of bad weather."

He went out again, in order to drive in the cows. The boy had gone after the goats, which had strayed off for some distance.

CHAPTER XV.

"**H**OW the wind blows!" exclaimed Gundel, quite out of breath. It had required all her strength to close the door. "What a storm! There never was such a gust before. Why, the wind's just as hot as if it were blown out of an oven."

She got up quickly and, filling a cup with water, emptied it on the fire that burned on the hearth.

"What are you doing?" cried Irma.

"We mustn't have a fire now," replied Gundel, and, after that, they sat there in the dark room, almost stifled by the smoke, for the storm raged so wildly that they dared not open a window.

"If father were only home," said Gundel; "I hope, for God's sake, he'll get home safe!"

Her last words were drowned by a sudden peal of thunder that reverberated from the mountains, with a crash as if the whole world were being destroyed. And now the wind raged and stormed more violently than before. The firmly built hut seemed to totter, the roof trembled, and one of the great boulders with which it had been secured fell to the ground.

"Give me your hand!" cried Gundel, in the dark. "If we must die—let's pray." She prayed aloud, but the crashing thunder drowned her voice. Suddenly the noise changed, and it sounded as if countless iron hammers were descending on the roof; the rattling, pounding and rumbling created a furious din.

"That's hail!" shrieked Gundel, putting her mouth to Irma's ear.

The thunder and hail continued, and, ever and anon, the lightning would flash through the smoke and darkness, causing the two girls to appear, in each other's eyes, as if transported to the infernal regions. The hailstones seemed to impel each other forward. Now they would descend with mighty force; then the fury of the storm would abate and they would fall more gently and steadily than before, as if the raging mountain demon had stopped to take breath, before again venting his ire on the mortals who had ventured to build a cottage on his lofty domain.

The lowing of the cows and the ringing of their bells were heard above the rattling hail.

"I opened the stable door, but the wind must have blown it shut," exclaimed Gundel; and, forgetting her own trouble, she hurried out. She came back in a hurry, and, placing an inverted pail on her head, went out again. Irma followed her example, and the two of them ducked their heads while the great hailstones rattled against the pails. Gundel tried to open the stable door, but the cows crowded about her so that she was thrown to the ground. In the midst of the noise, Irma heard Gundel's piercing cry. The bellowing, trembling leader cow was standing near Irma.

"Come along!" said Irma, seizing the cow by one of its horns. It obeyed her, and the other cows made way. Irma found Gundel, and, having helped her up, the two

opened the stable door, but were almost crushed to death, for the cows all tried to get in at once. They each had but one hand free, as the other was needed to hold the pail. They succeeded in getting to the wall and, at last, when all the cows were in the stable, the two girls waded through the hail with which the ground was thickly covered, and regained the cottage. They groped about until they found the hearth and sat down by it. And the two lonely, forlorn children sat there in the dark, while the storm raged without.

"I feel sure," cried Gundel, "that father must have found shelter somewhere. He knows every overhanging rock and—O God!" she suddenly cried, "just think of the poor blind man, out in such weather! Has the hail cut your hand and back, the way it did mine?" said she, crying, and nestling close to Irma.

"No, I feel nothing," replied Irma, and it really seemed as if physical pain could not affect her. She, too, had thought of the blind man, and also of the king whom filial ingratitude had turned out into the stormy night. But hail or wind were not half so violent as her regret that, yielding to pity, she had allowed a man to pass his hand across her face.

Is all lost again? Is all that has cost so great a struggle, sacrificed? wofully asked an inner voice—and yet she felt conscious of her purity.

"Thank God! it's only raining now," said Gundel at last. She struck a light, and the two looked at each other, as if they had just emerged from depths of darkness. The floor was wet with the water that had dripped from their clothes.

"Are you at home?" exclaimed a voice from without. The door opened and the little pitchman entered, carrying a young kid in his arms.

"Thank God you're safe and sound," he exclaimed, laying the kid down by the empty fireplace. With his sleeve, which was far wetter than either, he wiped the water from his eyes and forehead. Then he took a bottle of gentian brandy from the upper shelf and, after taking a drink, and forcing Gundel and Irma to do likewise, he went on to say: "I've gone through a good deal in

my time, but never anything like this. I know every tree and every rock for miles, but I seemed to have lost my way. While I stood there in the midst of the storm, I heard a chamois doe bleating pitifully, and I went up to her and there she stood, with the young kid that had just been born. It had hardly come into the world, before the hail tried to beat it to death. When the mother saw me, she ran away, but came back again and placed herself over the young kid, so that the hail shouldn't strike it, but her instead. I went near her, but the mother ran away again. I picked up the young one and, just as we were going on to look for shelter, I heard human voices. Two people were calling to a third one, who was roaring and screaming. When the lightning flashed, I saw that he was lying on the ground, unable to move.

"'Honored master, just lean on us; we'll soon find shelter,' I heard them saying, and when the lightning flashed again, I saw that we were near the Witches' Table. So I called out to them: 'The Witches' Table is over yonder.' Then there was another flash, and I saw that the two men who had been standing had also fallen down. They told me, afterward, that they had been afraid of me, and I couldn't think hard of them. In such a storm, and on such a night, one would almost believe in anything. I went up to them, told them who I was, and offered to lead them. It was hard work, though, to get along, for the blind man went on as if crazed, and kept talking about a lost child. At last, safe and sound, but dripping with water, we got under the Witches' Table, and there we lay. And whenever it lightened we could see the hailstones dancing on the rocks and beating against the trees. We waited until it stopped hailing, and the blind man told me that the next time I came down to the apothecary's, in the town, he would give me a gold piece. The king's there and so is the queen. He promised to see to it that I should get the medal for saving a life, and a pension, in the bargain, for the rest of my days. And now, children, get to bed, for you're soaking wet. What ails you, Irmgard? Why do you shiver so?'"

The little pitchman scolded Gundel for having let

cousin Irmgard sit about in her wet clothes. Now and then the little kid would cry piteously and shiver all over, so that the little pitchman brought down his bed-cover from the hay-loft and wrapped the kid in it. Then, with three fingers, he cleverly fed it with milk from a dish.

The little kid was soon asleep, and, in the room within, Irma was sleeping too.

"Thank God, you've had a good sleep," said Gundel, who was standing at Irma's bedside, late on the following morning. "How strange it seems! The hail didn't hurt you a bit and just see how I look." She showed the marks, but quickly added: "That's no matter; it'll soon be over. Just look at the sky! Don't it look as if it never could do any harm. Over by the stream, the lightning struck a tree and split it in two, and places where it used to be dry are covered with water. If I didn't feel it in every bone of my body, and couldn't see it, I'd hardly believe there had ever been a storm. But we were lucky, after all. None of the cattle were hurt, and the cowboy is here, too. He crept away, down the valley, where there was no storm at all."

It was a clear, bracing morning. Here and there, there were still some large hailstones lying in the crevices of the rocks. The cows were grazing on the meadow, and the cowboy was singing merrily. He was proud that the goats were the best judges of the weather; while grazing, they had moved down toward the valley, and that was the surest sign that a storm was brewing.

At noon, Franz came up from the farm. The torrents of water that had rushed down into the valley, had led them to suppose that something had happened, and Walpurga had sent Franz to find out all about it. The hot, midday sun soon dried up everything, and the waters did not long remain on the heights. Irma went out to her favorite resting-place and, spreading her blue rug on the ground, lay down.

Suddenly, she heard the sounds of a bugle horn. What was it? Was it royalty, or a dream?

The sounds were repeated. Irma's heart beat violently. Something drew near. She could hear it pant-

ing, as it forced its way through the crackling brush. She looked up and saw a stag rushing through the clearing near by, and the huntsmen pursuing and gaining upon it. Irma passed her hand over her eyes—she looked once more— It was the king and his suite.

Springing from his horse, the chief piqueur exclaimed: "The stag broke through here. Your Majesty. Here is the trail." He dipped his finger in the blood and showed it to the king. The king looked around—did he feel the glance directed upon him from the thicket? The glance that had once made him so happy, but that had, for him, been so long extinguished? He missed his stirrup; the horse reared wildly. Irma bent down, with her face against the mossy turf. She felt as if the whole hunt, as if all the horses' hoofs, were passing over her. She bit the grass on which she lay. She dug her hands into the earth. She feared to shriek aloud.

When she got up, all was quiet. She stared about her. Had it been a dream? In the distance, she heard the report of a gun and the sound of the bugle. The stag had fallen.

If one could die in that way, thought Irma to herself, sinking back on the moss, and weeping.

She arose. A storm-laden cloud had once more arisen within her soul, but it was for the last time. About her, all was clear and sunny. Hail and storm and lightning were forgotten. She went back to the hut, and often turned to look at the sun sinking in the west. And now, for the first time, she repaired to rest before nightfall. She was shivering with a fever-chill, and soon her cheeks were hot and red. She called the little pitchman to her bedside and asked him to give her a sheet of paper. Her hand trembled, while she wrote in pencil:

"Eberhard's daughter sends for Gunther."

She told the little pitchman to hurry to town, to give this paper to the great doctor in person, and to conduct him to her at once. Then she turned away and was calm again.

"I'll give you something good," said the little pitchman, while, with broad-brimmed hat on his head, and mountain-staff in his hand, he stood before her. "You'll

see, it'll do you good. I'll lay the kid down here at your feet; that'll do both o' you good. Shall I?"

Irma nodded assent.

The little pitchman did as he said he would. The kid looked up sleepily at Irma, and she smiled on it in return. Both soon closed their eyes.

Wandering in the dark, the little pitchman descended into the valley.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN in the valley, it had been raining all day long. What had been hail and thunder up among the mountains, had turned to rain, and occasional gleams of blue sky served to show that there was fair weather above.

Toward evening, the storm cleared away. The queen, accompanied by the ladies of her court, among whom Madame Gunther and Paula were now included, was sitting in the large music-room, the doors of which were open. Paula had been singing to the queen, for the first time, and, on account of her embarrassment, Madame Gunther begged that she might not be asked to sing again that day.

The relation between the queen and Madame Gunther was a peculiar one. The queen was charmed with her sincerity and thoroughness, but she found it difficult to accustom herself to the presence of one who was so independent of her. She was, at one time, tempted to regard this as pettiness, for, on the very day that Madame Gunther had accepted the breastpin, she had said to the queen: "Your Majesty, it will never do, unless you accept a present from me in return," saying which, she gave the queen a handsomely bound book, which a brother of hers, a physician residing in America, had written, on the subject of slavery. The queen accepted it with thanks, and Madame Gunther felt quite relieved, although it frequently cost her an effort to translate, as it were, all that she wished to say, in order to clothe it in the proper court costume, for she took a pride in rejecting prescribed forms.

The queen inquired why they saw so little of the elder

daughter, the professor's widow. Madame Gunther replied that, as Bronnen and their nephew were visiting them, and as there was much to look after in the house, Cornelia had gladly assumed these duties. It always seemed like a new truth to the queen, or like tidings from some strange world, to find that the daily wants of life required special attention and did not provide for themselves.

The weather exerted a depressing influence on the spirits of all. Here in the country, and especially in this little dairy-farm, where they missed many comforts, and where, on account of the small amount of room, they were prevented from scattering and seeking various diversions, the effects of the weather were all the more noticeable and unpleasant.

Their delight in anticipation of the morrow was all the greater, as it promised to be a bright day.

It was agreed that they should all meet, at dinner, near the second waterfall, and that the king would join them there.

The king was in his cabinet, engaged with Bronnen. The new telegraph was carrying many messages to and fro. Gunther, the intendant, Sixtus and several other gentlemen were smoking their cigars and walking under the drooping trees of the avenue, which the evening sun was now lighting up with a thousand brilliant hues.

The ladies in the music-room maintained that the Alpine glow (*Alpenglühén*) could be seen that day. They naturally expected to see it daily, although it is an exceedingly rare phenomenon.

The night had come on, and the king was sitting at the card-table, with Gunther and two of the gentlemen-in-waiting.

A servant came in and informed Gunther that there was a man outside who wished to speak with him at once. Gunther gave his cards to the ever-obliging intendant, and went out where, leaning on his great Alpine staff, his broad-brimmed, crumpled hat in his hand, and his rug thrown over him, stood the little pitchman. He kept his left hand in his pocket, and when Gunther came up to him, he said:

"Here's a paper for you."

Gunther read the note, and then rubbed his eyes and passed his hand across his face, as if to awaken himself.

"Who sent you?" he asked.

"I guess that'll tell you—our Irmgard."

Gunther started at the mention of the name, here before the very door, when within sat the king and the queen—

He went up to the lamp in the corridor, and read the note again. There it stood:

"Eberhard's daughter sends for Gunther."

This man, who had a right to boast that he was always calm and composed, was obliged to support himself by the balusters, and it was some time before he could utter a word. When he looked up, his glance met that of the little pitchman.

"Who are you?" he asked, at last.

"I'm from the freehold farm. Walpurga's my niece—"

"Very well; go outside and wait for me. I'll be there directly."

The little pitchman went out, and Gunther summoned all his self-command, in order to return to the card-room to excuse himself, and say that he had been summoned to the bedside of one who was dangerously ill. He scarcely knew how he could, without betraying his emotion, mention this to those who were so directly concerned, but he hoped to do so, nevertheless.

At that moment, he fortunately met Paula and Bronnen, who had been walking in the garden and were just about to enter the house.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Gunther, addressing them. "Paula, send me my hat; and you, dear Bronnen, present my excuses to their majesties, and tell them I am required instantly, by one who is dangerously ill. Pray do this without exciting attention; and, Paula, don't mention it to your mother until you're on the way home. I shall be gone all night."

"Can't Dr. Sixtus go?" asked Bronnen.

"No. Pray ask me no more. I shall be home early to-morrow morning; but if I don't come, I will meet you by the waterfall, at dinner-time."

Bronnen and Paula went into the house, and, a few moments later, a lackey brought Gunther his hat.

Gunther hurried off with the little pitchman. Only once did he turn back to look at the brilliantly lighted windows, and to think of those who were sitting within, void of care and foreboding naught. How startled they would be if they had heard the tidings that affected him so powerfully. On the way to his house, he had but little to say to the little pitchman. He did not care to question him more closely, for he feared lest some answer might be overheard, and thus prematurely betray the secret. He was still, in his own mind, endeavoring to devise some plan by which all could be arranged and adjusted.

It was not until they drew near the house, that Gunther asked:

"What ails the patient? What does she complain of?"

"She don't complain of anything. She's got a hot fever, and she has been coughing for a long time."

"Has she her perfect senses?"

"Just the same as ever; but Gundel, my daughter, says she sometimes calls out in her sleep: 'Victory!'"

"Just wait here," said Gunther, when they reached the house. "I'll send you something to eat and drink; but tell no one who sent you here."

Cornelia was sitting near the lamp and reading to her blind cousin. He had only told her of the terrors of the hailstorm; his heart-sufferings he had kept to himself. He had been sleeping nearly all day, and now felt refreshed. Cornelia was alarmed when she saw her father, but he soon quieted her. His medicine-chest and some well-sealed packages of refreshing and strengthening food, were soon in readiness, and were packed upon the mule. Gunther rode off, the little pitchman walking by his side. The face of the latter was scarcely visible, for his broad-brimmed hat had not yet recovered from the effects of yesterday's storm. It was not until they had left the town behind them, that Gunther asked:

"How far have we to go?"

"It takes three hours on foot, but on horseback it's a full hour more."

When they entered the forest, Gunther halted and said:

"Come near. So you are Walpurga's uncle?"

"To be sure. I'm her mother's own and only brother, for the two others died young."

"What do you call the sick girl?"

"Irmgard; that's her name."

"And how long has she been with you?"

"Ever since Hansei bought the farm. She came with us then from the lake. She was sick, and they say she's a little bit out of her mind; but I don't believe a word of it. She's got her right senses; rather too much than too little."

"And don't you know her family name?" asked Gunther.

"I never asked," and the little pitchman, with great volubility, went on to tell all he knew of Irmgard's life and how, for years, she had worn a bandage on her forehead, and had never taken it off until she had gone up to the mountain meadow. He described her life so touchingly that Gunther stopped and, taking the old man by the hand, said:

"You're a good man."

Uncle Peter did not dispute this, but maintained that, in all the world, there was no one so good as Irmgard.

Rapid rivulets crossed their path in many places, and the little pitchman told Gunther of the storm of the previous night; how terrible it is when, all of a sudden, the air seems filled with stones that pound away at one, and how he had helped the blind man, and also what had been promised him. He would often take hold of the mule's bridle and guide it down some steep descent, through a brook and then up the hill again.

"You must have gone through a good deal yourself, Doctor," said the little pitchman. He would have liked his companion to entertain him by the way. He thought that one sitting on the mule could talk far more comfortably than he who was walking by his side. He could feel it in his chest that to talk while going up hill, was no easy matter. As if divining this, Gunther alighted when they reached a level place, and made the little pitchman mount. After much persuasion, Uncle Peter at last consented and

got up; but as soon as they began to ascend again, he dismounted, and insisted on Gunther's riding.

"If our Irmgard wants to leave us now," said the little pitchman, "I'd willingly give her up to you, Doctor. She can play the zither splendidly, and when she's well again, you can teach her anything. Everything comes easy to her. But I hope she'll stay with us. She's shy and doesn't like to go among people."

It seemed as if he had divined Gunther's very thoughts, for the doctor had been asking himself how he could take Irma to his house, and yet keep the court ignorant of her existence. In his mind's eye, he already saw her sitting beside his wife and Cornelia, and he felt that he had gained a daughter who would fill Paula's place.

It was dark in the forest and the stars were gleaming overhead. "It's past midnight," said the little pitchman, when they reached the crest of a projecting hill. "The moon's coming up over there."

Gunther looked back and saw the half-moon rising and looking like a ruin suspended in the vast firmament.

"There's some of our cows already," said the little pitchman, and his voice grew brighter. "That's Blackbird, with the ding-dong bell. She always strays furthest of all; but we'll be home in less than half an hour, at any rate."

They went on in silence, and at last reached the hut. A ray of light shone through the opening in the closed window-shutter.

Gunther entered.

"I'll go in first and tell her the gentleman's here," said the little pitchman, softly.

Gunther assented.

He soon came out again and said:

"She's asleep, but her cheeks are as red as fire, and Gundel says that she often called out, in her sleep: 'Father!' and sometimes, 'Victory.' She must be having pleasant dreams."

Gunther entered the cottage.

At the sight of Irma he seemed as if paralyzed. "What's that?" he asked the little pitchman, when the kid at Irma's feet raised its head and stared at him.

"It's a little chamois kid that I found yesterday. She's very fond of it," answered the little pitchman in a whisper.

Gunther requested the little pitchman and Gundel to leave the room, and then sat down silently at Irma's bedside. He felt her pulse and touched her forehead, and the little pitchman, who had lingered in the room, asked: "How is she?"

Gunther shrugged his shoulders and beckoned him to go out.

The little pitchman hurried up to the hay-loft, awakened Franz, and ordered him to hurry down to his master and mistress and tell them to come up directly, for Irmgard was very sick.

He lay down on the hay, feeling as if every bone in his body were broken. He had never before been so tired, but he could neither rest nor sleep, and was soon standing in front of the cottage, listening at the window.

Meanwhile, Gunther remained with the patient. She moved now and then, but did not open her eyes. The kid at her feet was also sleeping again.

Gunther had removed the light from the room, and now sat in the dark.

"The day is coming, let me see the daylight!" cried Irma, suddenly starting up.

A gray streak of light fell through the opening in the shutter.

"Let me see the daylight," said Irma again, and the little pitchman outside opened the shutters. A flood of light poured into the chamber. A radiant glow passed over Irma's countenance. She stretched out both hands to Gunther. He clasped them, and she kissed his hands with her feverish lips.

"You have achieved great results," said Gunther. "You have shown a power that I cannot but admire. Hold fast to it."

"I thank you! Through you, my father returns to me. Lay your hand upon my forehead."

"I place my hand upon your forehead, and in your father's spirit I bless you, and with this kiss I kiss away all your burdens. You are free!"

Irma lay there quietly, and Gunther's hand lay on her brow, while, out of doors, the rosy tint of morn ascended higher and higher, and at last the light flooded the room with its golden glow.

Gunther went out and brought a tonic draught for Irma. It revived and refreshed her.

"I know that I am about to die," she said in a clear voice, "and I am happy that I have lived in consciousness and can die in consciousness."

She gave her journal to Gunther and told him that the wish she had there expressed, in relation to her place of burial, need not be regarded; that the uncle knew which had been her favorite spot, and that she wished to be buried there, with nothing to mark her grave.

Gunther had, before this, said that he had held many a dying hand in his—he had never sat by a death-bed like that of Irma's.

CHAPTER XVII.

"**I** KNEW it! I felt it must come!" cried Walpurga when Franz brought the news of Irma's illness. "I knew she'd never come back!" she repeated again and again, weeping, wringing her hands, and praying by turns.

"That won't help any," said Hansei, laying his hand on her shoulder. "Get up; you're not like this at other times. Come, may be it isn't so bad after all; and even if it should be, this is no time to cry and weep; we must do all that can be done."

"What can I do? What shall I do?" said Walpurga, turning her tearful face to Hansei.

He helped her up and said:

"Franz says there's a doctor up there, who has a medicine chest with him. And now let's eat something and then go up to her."

"Oh dear Lord, I can't walk three steps; I feel as if my limbs were broken."

"Then you'd better stay here and I'll go up."

"Would you leave me here alone? What am I to do, then?"

"I don't know what. Go to bed; perhaps you can sleep."

"I don't want to go to bed; I don't want to sleep; I don't want anything. I'll go along, too, and, if I die on the way, I can't help it."

"Don't talk so! you wrong me and the children when you do," Hansei was about to say, but he made a rapid movement, as if to repress the words. "There's no need of saying that," thought he; "when women, filled with pity for themselves, begin to complain of their lot, they don't know what they say."

Hansei brought his wife her best clothes, for she was so agitated that she scarcely knew where they were, or how to put them on. Hansei proved quite a clever valet.

"Now you must put your shoes on yourself," said he, at last.

Walpurga could not help smiling through her tears. It was not until then that she perceived how kindly and faithfully he had helped her, and, with a bright voice, she said: "Yes, so I can; you've helped me, and now I feel that I can walk."

Hansei had the meal brought in and, after placing his mountain staff, his hunting-bag and his hat in readiness, he sat down to eat. Walpurga was also obliged to sit down, although she ate but little. One of Hansei's great virtues was that he could eat heartily at any time. He did full justice to the meal, and his manner seemed to say that when one has satisfied his hunger, he is better prepared for any undertaking.

Before leaving, he cut off a large piece of bread and put it in his pocket.

The children were consigned to the care of the upper servant, and one of the laboring women was also charged to remain in the house. Hansei and his wife started for the meadow.

They had already gone some distance, when Burgei came running after them, crying: "I want to go along; I want to go to Cousin Irmgard."

There was no help for it. They were obliged to take the child with them, for they were afraid to let her go back alone and neither of them cared to take her back.

"You're a naughty child, a very naughty child! And now I've got to carry you, a big girl like you," said Walpurga, taking the child in her arms. Hansei nodded, with a pleased air. It was well the child was with them, for then his wife, who was apt to go off into extremes, would not become so violent if the worst should happen.

Walpurga, who had at first thought that she could not walk alone, now carried the child and stepped out bravely.

"Let Burgei walk for a while, and when she gets tired again, I'll carry her," said Hansei.

As long as the path was wide enough, the child walked between its parents, and when it grew narrower, they let her run on ahead. When they found that they could get on but slowly, on account of the child, Hansei took her up in his arms, where she soon fell asleep.

Walpurga then softly whispered to Hansei:

"I must tell you now who our Irmgard is."

"And I tell you I don't want to know. She must tell me herself, if she lives; and if she's dead, you can tell me then, just as well."

"Dead!" cried Walpurga, "Do you know more than I do? Did Franz tell you anything in secret?"

"Franz told me nothing but what you've heard."

"But why do you talk about death in that way?"

"Because one who's very sick can easily die. But do be calm."

"Yes, yes; I hardly know that we are in the woods, and I feel as if I couldn't see a thing. Stop a moment! There's a doctor up there. He knows her, and others who know her will come, too. The man who came to see us the other day is her brother, and now they'll go and take our Irmgard away with them."

"If she's in her right mind, and wants to go of her own free will, we can't say anything against it," said Hansei, "but this I do say, and no one will move me from it. As long as she's so sick that she can't say what she wants, I won't let them do a thing to her. I'm Hansei, and I'm her protector; nothing shall happen to her— All I ask of you, is to stand by me and not interfere. You know when I say a thing, I mean it."

"Yes, yes, you're right!" said Walpurga. Hansei's

resolute words seemed to infuse her with new strength, for she went up the steep mountain path without the slightest difficulty. It almost seemed as if Hansei had been carrying her as well as the child. Moved by this thought, she suddenly said:

"Do you remember when you once wanted to carry me, at home by the lake? Oh, dear me, it seems as if we must have been very different beings then, for we knew nothing at all of the world."

"We're none the worse off, for knowing and having some of it!" replied Hansei, in a loud voice, and awakening the child. "There, now; run along again," said he to Burgei.

They rested for a little while. Hansei remembered the piece of bread that he had put in his pocket and, cutting off a bit of it, he said while pointing toward the valley with his knife: "Our brook runs down through there, and it's only an hour's distance from here to the little town where Stasi lives."

"Only an hour from here?" exclaimed Walpurga. "Then I'll walk over there. She's the best, the only help. You go on with the child, straight up to the hut. I'll soon follow you by way of the town, and I'll bring something good with me."

"Wife! Have you gone mad? Don't make me crazy, too. Do you want to run off, when you're so near the dying one?"

"Then I must tell you. The queen is down there and she alone can help her. God be with you, Hansei, and with you too, Burgei. I'll soon follow after you."

Away she ran, through the forest, along the stream, and toward the town.

"Where's mother? Mother! mother!" cried the child.

"Be quiet!" said Hansei. "Mother has another child down there, and he's a prince and will send you golden clothes."

"Is it an enchanted prince that mother is going to free from a spell?" asked the child.

"Yes, he's enchanted," said Hansei, endeavoring to quiet her.

"But what was he changed into?" asked the child.

"Into a cuckoo; but not another word now; be quiet."

Filled with strange thoughts, the father and child went up the mountain. Hansei could not understand how, at such a moment, his wife could leave her friend and go to the queen—. Perhaps they were bound together in some way? He shook his head. Matters that he could not disentangle, he always put away from him. The only thing was to see what could be done for the sick one; that was the most important matter. He squared his shoulders and was ready, if the physician thought well of it, to carry Irmgard in his arms, all the way down to the farm.

The child ran along, looking about it with wondering eyes. "He's calling! he's calling!" whispered she. "My mother will free you."

A cuckoo was really crying in the wood, through which the noonday sun was gleaming. His cry was sometimes near and then more distant, and at last, uttering his peculiar note, he flew over the travelers' heads.

Hansei, with the child, at last reached the shepherd's hut, where the uncle and Gundel, with sorrowful countenances, came forward to meet him.

"She's still alive, but she can't last long," said the uncle, wiping away his tears with his sleeve. "The doctor won't let any of us go in to her. But where's Walpurga?"

"She'll soon be here," replied Hansei. It was all he could do to keep off the cows, who knew their master and came up to him, as was their wont, in order to get a handful of salt. But he had forgotten to bring it with him, and all the salt they had up here was in the room that no one was permitted to enter.

Hansei ordered the cowboy to drive the cows off for some distance, so that the sick one might not hear the sound of the bells. That was all he could do for Irma.

He sat down sadly on the bench before the hut, and taking up a piece of carved wood which lay on the ground, he looked at it as carefully as if it were marble and turned it again and again. He sat there for a long time. Then he put Burgei in Gundel's charge, and, hoping to meet his wife, went out alone along the road that led toward

the little town. But it was long before she came. He went further into the forest, and was vexed, as he always was whenever he came up here, to think of yonder fine trees that were his own property, but which could not be felled, because no one could get up to the rocks on which they were. A chattering magpie, sitting on the high branches of a beautiful pine, seemed to be making sport of him. After he had again and again passed his hand over his face, Hansei became conscious of the thoughts that had engaged him in the midst of all this trouble. There was nothing wrong in it—he was sure of that; but this was not the time to think of such things, and, as if the trouble were now dawning on him for the first time, he was overwhelmed with grief.

He turned back and went toward the hut. The doctor was just coming out.

“You are the freehold farmer, I suppose?”

“Yes; and you’re the doctor?”

“Yes.”

“How is she?”

“I don’t think she will die before evening.”

Hansei’s eyes filled with tears.

The uncle asked Gunther to allow him to fetch out the little kid. He granted his request. Stepping softly, he brought it out, gave it something to drink and, carrying it back again, placed it at the sick girl’s feet.

“She opened her eyes and nodded to me, but she didn’t say a word; and then she closed her eyes again,” said the uncle.

Hansei begged that he might be permitted to see Irmgard once more. He was allowed to look through the crevice in the shutter. When Gunther again returned to the sick-room, Hansei, weeping as if his heart would break, walked out along the road that led toward the town.

“Uncle’s right: she’s become like an angel,” said he to himself.

The calf that was born on the first day that they had come up to the shepherd’s hut seemed conscious of its special claims on Hansei. In spite of all he could do it kept running after him for salt. Hansei succeeded in

satisfying it, by giving it the last morsel of bread that he had about him.

When he reached the woods, he was obliged to sit down; and there he wept and would, now and then, look about him as if bewildered. How could it be possible that the sun was still shining, the cuckoo crying, and the hawk screaming, while she who was up there was breathing her last—

What could Walpurga want of the queen? "Her place is up there," thought he to himself, again and again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOLLOWING the course of the brook, Walpurga had hurried down the mountain-side. She soon saw the little town and the farmhouse, on the roof of which a bright flag was fluttering.

Walpurga sat down on a rock by the stream, to recover her breath and rest for a few moments. A cuckoo flew over her head and up the mountain.

"That's a bad beginning," said she to herself.

She walked on toward the dairy-farm. Looking through the iron railing, she saw a boy playing about the garden. His hair fell over his shoulders, in long, fair curls.

He wore a light dress and a hat with a feather. She felt as if her heart must burst and, with convulsive grip, she held fast to one of the iron rails of the fence in order to support herself. Then she walked on toward the garden-gate.

"Frau von Gerloff—the prince—my child! my child!" she cried, while she rushed toward the prince and, kneeling down in the grass, kissed and embraced him.

The boy screamed.

"Oh, that's his voice!" cried Walpurga.

Startled for a moment, Frau von Gerloff stood there as if rooted to the spot. Then she approached and ordered Walpurga away. The servants also advanced and ordered her to go. The prince nestled against Frau von Gerloff, as if to hide himself.

Walpurga was still kneeling in the grass, and could not rise.

"He don't know me any more, and I'm his nurse!" she cried, looking around confusedly at those about her. Her voice seemed to exert an influence on the child. It turned its face toward her. It was flushed with red and a tear still hung on his eyelashes, although his face was wreathed in smiles.

"God greet you!" said he. He had been taught this expression, on account of their sojourn in the country.

"He can say 'God greet you'—oh, he can speak! Dear me, he can speak! Now just say, 'Walpurga,' child. Can you say, 'Walpurga'?"

"Walpurga," repeated the child.

The queen approached, attended by Countess Brinkenstein and Paula. Walpurga was about to hasten toward her, but the queen motioned her away, and ordered Frau von Gerloff to remove the prince. The prince was led out of the garden, but he looked back at Walpurga, who nodded to him and quite forgot that she was in the presence of the queen, until the latter said:

"You have thrust yourself in here. You must certainly be aware that we did not desire to see you, and you know why."

"I don't want to defend myself now. I've come for something else," urged poor Walpurga.

"What is it?" asked the queen.

Breathing heavily, and with frequent pauses, Walpurga hurriedly said:

"Your Majesty, one may be looked upon as wicked, or may not be looked upon at all, and yet be honest. You and I are both of us in good health and can settle that some other time. But I have a few words to tell you—quite alone. Dear queen! for mercy's sake!—you'll be glad of it to your dying hour. Dear queen, you must die as well as the rest of us—I beg you, for pity's sake, listen to me alone, only for one minute! Send the others away, there's no time to lose!"

The queen motioned Countess Brinkenstein and Paula to withdraw. She was alone with Walpurga, and the latter, with throbbing heart, said:

"Irma lives!"

"What do you say?"

"She's dying; perhaps she's dead by this time!"

"I don't understand you. Are you mad?"

"No, dear queen. Sit down here on this seat. You're trembling all over. I've been awkward about it, but I couldn't help it. But it doesn't matter about me, now. Do with me what you choose—Irma lives—perhaps only this day, perhaps not even that long. Dear queen, you must go with me. You must go to her. It's all that's left her on earth— A single word—a hand—"

Countess Brinkenstein and Paula, who saw that the queen was leaning back, as pale as death, hurried to her assistance. As soon as she heard the rustling of their dresses, she raised herself and said:

"Walpurga, repeat what you have just told me."

Walpurga repeated that Irma was still alive, and added that she had been concealed with her for nearly four years, and that Gunther was now with her.

The two ladies seemed dumb with surprise, but Walpurga again turned to the queen and exclaimed:

"For God's sake, don't lose a minute! Come with me. Stasi, who once turned a prayer for the queen to me, lives in there. Dear queen, if you can't forgive others, how can they still pray for you? Just think how you felt in that solemn night, dear queen. Stand up, put all else away from you and hold fast to your good heart alone! Dear queen—"

"Do not annoy her majesty," said Countess Brinkenstein, interrupting her.

But Walpurga continued:

"Your Majesty, when you die, neither court ladies, nor anything else can help you. Leave all behind you, for one short hour of your life! Come with me alone, and ask me nothing more. She'll be dead before night. This very day, you can perform a good deed which will last for ever."

"I will—I must go to her!" said the queen, rising from her seat and walking toward the house. Her step was quick, her cheeks flushed with excitement.

"Your Majesty," said Countess Brinkenstein, remonstrating, "the gracious king is out riding, and will be at

the waterfall at dinner-time. Will Your Majesty not wait until then?"

"No," replied the queen, in a determined voice, as if the question had interrupted a train of thought. "I desire," said she, "to be permitted to act upon my own responsibility."

"Your Majesty, there is no carriage-road to the mountain meadow," mildly added Countess Brinkenstein.

"But there's a bridle-path almost all the way up to the cottage," replied Walpurga. "And there's Stasi's husband; he's a forester and knows all the roads; I'll call him."

She hurried to the inspector's office and brought him out with her. He confirmed her statement that they could drive for a good distance, and that then they could ride.

The queen ordered him to precede them with saddle-horses. She retired to her apartments, and soon afterward, accompanied by Paula, Sixtus, and Walpurga, drove up the mountain. Two lackeys were sitting upon the rumble.

The betrothed of the man who had once loved Irma, and the wife of him whose love Irma had returned, sat side by side, hurrying to her death-bed. It was not until they were well on their way that they regained their composure.

There was but little that Walpurga could tell them about Irma's simple life, and she, therefore, made so much the more of the uncle's account of how Irma had traveled to the capital with him, in disguise, and how, at the summer palace, she had once more beheld the queen and the prince. Her recital was frequently interrupted by tears, while she went on to tell them how Irma had nursed her dying mother, and how her mother, who had known all, had, on her death-bed, given Irma her blessing.

The queen held her handkerchief to her eyes and silently extended her hand to Walpurga.

The more Walpurga told them, the more pure and exalted did Irma appear. Turning to Paula, the queen said:

"That is life in death—it must have required inconceivable courage."

"There are saints even in our days," replied Paula.

"All that olden times knew of the great, the beautiful and the true, still exists in the world, even though it be scattered and hidden from view."

In the depth of her sorrow, the queen's eye beamed with conscious delight at the thought that, although Gunther was no longer with her, that which was best in him was now beside her in his child.

Walpurga was again obliged to tell them of that morning by the lake. And then she went on to speak of Irma's beautiful work, but she soon noticed that the queen was not listening, and stopped.

They drove on in silence.

They reached the end of the carriage road, and now continued the journey on horseback.

Soon after the queen's departure, the king and Bronnen returned from the chase. They felt refreshed and invigorated by the sport, and the king inquired whether the queen had already repaired to the waterfall, for she had expressed a desire to sketch there.

For the first time in her life, Countess Brinkenstein was so embarrassed that she almost lost her presence of mind. She, of course, felt a proper sympathy for Irma, but as long as she had lived in concealment she should have died in concealment. Why should she thus agitate them all anew? She shook her head in deprecation of this eccentric being who, long after one had mourned and forgotten her, was not even decently dead.

With faltering voice, she informed the king of what had happened, and scarcely ventured to tell him that on her own responsibility, and contrary to all court regulations, the queen had gone away, attended by no one but Paula and privy councilor Sixtus.

For some moments, the king neither moved nor uttered a word, but stood there with his eyes bent on the ground. The very earth at his feet seemed to tremble. Everything seemed unsteady as if in an earthquake, and terrors and despair overwhelmed him.

All that he had experienced, during long years of suffering and expiation, now rose before him again. He had striven and wrestled and made sacrifices, and no one had thanked him for all this; least of all his own heart, for

he was burdened with guilt and yet anxious to do good, and forced to acknowledge, in all humility, that the power to do good was yet left him.

Trembling with agitation, he pressed his clenched hand against his brow. His cheeks burned, while his limbs shook with a feverish chill. God be thanked, she still lives! The guilt of death is lifted from my soul; and she, too, will see what I have suffered, and what I have become—

During the last few moments, he had lived the secret torments of past years over again. He now looked about him, as if emerging from another world. There had been no earthquake; the trees, the houses, the mountains still stood in their old places. He looked at Bronnen and, offering his icy cold hand, whispered almost inaudibly:

“And so the presentiment that you expressed at the hunting-seat, is true.”

His voice was thick. He ordered fresh saddle-horses and a second carriage to be sent after him.

A few moments later, Bronnen and he were following in the wake of the queen.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE queen rode up the mountain, while Walpurga walked on by her side. The sun was already sinking in the west. Its slanting rays shone through the tree-tops and on the road which Gunther and the little pitchman had taken on the night before, and there were now but few signs of the rivulets that had yesterday traversed the path.

The queen did not utter a word, but she often gazed at Walpurga, and many old memories and associations were awakened in her mind. There, walking along beside me, is a woman who was brought from her home at my request. In those days, when, with the king and Gunther, I was sitting under the weeping ash, I was gentle and forgiving toward the fallen, and Gunther said I deserved that thousands should pray for me. Did I really deserve it then? Do I deserve it now? At that time,

no one had ever offended or injured me, and it was easy to appear forgiving. But as soon as I was wronged, I gave way to scorn and hatred, and pride in my own virtue, and encouraged myself in that feeling. He changed his whole life, put all that was trivial and vain away from him, and devoted his whole mind to faithful labors for the sake of his people, while I became more and more austere and inflexible just because I was so virtuous. Are you so virtuous, after all? What is the virtue that lives for itself alone? And she who erred so bitterly; has she not expiated still more bitterly? Sinner though she be, she stands far above me. She died for my sake, and yet what has her death profited me? I have left my husband to achieve his difficult work unaided and alone, deserted him in the hour of greatest need. I have lived for myself alone, for to live for my child was to live for myself. I have had charity for the poor and helpless. But how as to my first duty? I could not conquer myself—and am I the one who dares say that I am capable of the highest, and “if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out?” Gunther was right. No one can save you but yourself, for no one else can so often tell you the truth.

During the many years in which she has been striving to perfect herself, and in which he has strengthened himself in noble deeds for his people, what have I been doing? It is I who have sinned. You shall not die, Irma! You must still live, so that I can tell you that I am lost if you die without having forgiven me.

The queen gladly gave way to these thoughts, for they gradually lightened the burden which had so long exerted a depressing influence upon her.

“Have we much further to go?” she asked Walpurga.

Fear again seized her. If Irma were dead! If it were too late for the meeting that would free them both!—She pressed her hand to her throbbing heart, as if it too must cease to beat when the heart up there had ceased to live. In her mind’s eye, she beheld Irma, as if glorified and transfigured, while she herself seemed so pitifully small.

“We’ll soon be there,” said Walpurga.

A voice above was heard, calling:

“Walpurga!”

The sound was echoed again and again from the mountains.

"That's my husband," said Walpurga to the queen, and, in an equally loud voice, she called out:

"Hansei!"

He answered again from above.

Hansei drew near, and when he saw the grand gentlemen, the ladies on horseback, and the liveried servants, he took off his hat and passed his hand over his eyes, as if to satisfy himself that he saw aright.

"How is it with her?" asked Walpurga.

"She's still alive, but she won't last long. I left about an hour ago, and who knows what may have happened since then? The doctor's with her, though."

"We can't ride any farther," said the inspector. The queen and Paula alighted. Sixtus and the servants followed, while they climbed the last hill.

"That's the queen there, in the light silk shawl," said Walpurga, addressing Hansei with a significant gesture.

"It's all the same to me," he answered. "Our Irmgard's better than any of them. What matters the queen? When death comes we're pretty much the same all around. We'll all of us have to die one of these days, and then it won't matter what we've been in these few years."

Bestowing a hurried glance on Hansei, and beckoning Paula to remain behind, the queen hastened forward. She was unattended, but yet, at her right and her left, before and behind her, were the spirits of fear and of deliverance. Fear cried: "Irma is dead; you are too late—" and it seemed as if this would arrest her steps and deprive her of her breath. Deliverance cried: "Hurry on—why loiter? You are free, you bring freedom with you, and shall gain freedom for yourself."

She put forth her hands, as if to wave off the powers that were contending within and about her.

Fear gained the mastery and, with a wailing shriek for help, she cried out:

"Irma! Irma!" and "Irma, Irma," was echoed again and again from the mountains. The whole world was shouting Irma's name.

Irma was still lying within the room, and Gunther was

sitting at her bedside. Her breathing was difficult. She scarcely ever turned her head, and only now and then slightly opened her eyes.

Gunther had taken Eberhard's note-book with him, and found an opportunity to read these words of his to Irma: "May this serve to enlighten me on the day and in the hour when my mind becomes obscured."

When he read the words: "God yet dwells in that which, to us, seems lost and ruined," Irma raised herself, but she soon leaned back again and beckoned him to proceed. He read: "And should my eye be dimmed in death—I have beheld the eternal One— My eyes have penetrated eternity. Free from distortion and self-destruction, the immortal spirit soars aloft."

Gunther stopped and laid the note-book on Irma's bed. She rested her hand upon it. After a while she raised her hand and, pressing it to her brow, said, while she closed her eyes:

"And yet he chastised me!"

"Whatever he may have done to you, was not done with his free, pure will. A paroxysm, a relapse into mortality, affected it. In the spirit of your father, and as surely as I hope that truth may dwell with me in my own dying hour, I forgive you. You have achieved your own pardon. Forgive him, as he has surely forgiven you. He would bless you now, as I bless you. Remember him lovingly, for the sake of the love he bore you."

Irma seized the hand which Gunther had laid upon her brow, and kissed it. Then, without turning around, and as if speaking to herself, she said: "Stay with me," again and again.

For hours, Gunther sat by her bedside. Not a sound was heard but her painful breathing, which was gradually becoming more and more difficult.

And now, when the mountains echoed her name again and again, Irma raised her head and looked to right and left. "Do you hear it, too?" she asked. "My name—voices, voices everywhere! Voices—" The door opened, and the queen entered the room.

"Oh! at last you are here!" gasped Irma, with a deep sigh. Gathering all the strength yet left her, she raised

herself up and knelt in the bed. Her long hair fell over her, her eyes sparkled with a strange luster. She folded her hands and, stretching out her arms, she cried, in heart-rending tones:

"Forgive me! Forgive me!"

"Forgive me, Irma! My sister!" sobbed the queen, clasping Irma in her arms and kissing her.

A smile passed over Irma's face. Then, uttering a loud cry, she fell back and was no more.

The queen knelt at her bedside and Walpurga, who had stood in the background, stepped forward and closed Irma's eyes.

All was hushed. Not a sound was heard, save the sobbing of the queen and Walpurga.

Steps were heard approaching.

"Where? Where is she?" cried the king.

Gunther opened the door and with both hands motioned to him to be silent.

"Dead!" cried the king.

Gunther nodded affirmatively. He beckoned to Walpurga, and she left the room with him.

The king knelt down silently beside the corpse.

The queen arose and, placing her hand on her husband's head, said:

"Forgive me, Kurt, as I am forgiven!"

He seized the proffered hand, and, hand in hand, they stood there for a long while, gazing at Irma, on whose face there rested a gentle smile, even in death. It seemed as if they could not turn away from the sight. At last, the queen removed her white shawl and spread it over Irma.

They left the hut. The sun was setting in purple glory, and all about them was hushed in silence.

Gunther approached the queen, gave her the journal wrapped in the bandage, and said: "This is Irma's bequest to Your Majesty."

The queen went up to Walpurga, silently offered her hand, and kissed the child that she was carrying in her arms.

The king offered his hand to Hansei and said: "I thank you; I shall see you again."

The little pitchman went up to the king and queen and said:

"May God reward you for having come to her. She deserved it."

The king and queen walked away in the direction of the forest. Their retinue kept in the background.

CHAPTER XX.

THE king and queen went into the forest.

They were walking hand in hand.

Night drew on. The wind rustled through the tree-tops.

The queen stood still for a moment and then, impelled by the ardent love she had so long repressed, embraced her husband, kissing his eyes, his mouth and his brow, and said:

"I've asked the departed one to forgive me! She died with my kiss on her lips. I now ask you who still live, to forgive me. You have both expiated—she, alone, by herself; you, alone, while at my side!"

She took out an amulet which she had worn hidden next to her heart. It was the betrothal ring which the king had given to her.

"Take this ring, and put it on your hand," she said.

"We are united anew," replied the king, while he put the ring on his finger and embraced the queen. He clasped her in his arms and her head rested against his heart.

With a firm step, they descended the mountain unto where their carriages were waiting for them.

Followed by the servants, Bronnen, Sixtus, and Paula also descended the mountain.

The king and queen were in the first carriage; Paula and Sixtus in the second. Bronnen went back with Gunther to the cottage.

The newly espoused arrived at the dairy-farm. The first thing they did was to go to the crown prince's apartments and, while they stood at the child's bed, the king said:

"He sleeps, and his innocent, infant mind knows nothing of our differences. It is well for us that, with his dawning powers, he will see in us only love and harmony, enduring unto death."

During all that night, the king and queen sat by the lamp, reading the journal of the solitary worldling.

Gunther and Bronnen had lingered in the hut above. Gunther sat with Walpurga for a while, holding her hand in his, while he told her that her perfect innocence had now been brought to light. A silent nod was her only reply.

The cows gathered about the hut. Their bellowing and snorting proved that their unerring instinct told them of the presence of death, and scarcely were they driven away, before they returned again.

The little pitchman dug a grave during the night. It was up at the spot where Irma had so often rested. He shed many a tear over his work, and once, when he paused to take breath, said to himself: "When the kid is old enough to run of itself, I'll let it go back into the woods."

Irma was buried at early dawn. Hansei, the little pitchman, Gunther and Bronnen carried her, Walpurga and the child following after them. Gundel and Franz had covered the sides and the bottom of the grave with Alpine roses. Wrapped in the queen's white mantle, Irma was silently laid to rest, just as the rosy dawn appeared in the east.

Down in the valley, the king and queen had been reading Irma's journal. Day was breaking. They gazed at the rosy dawn and lifted their eyes to the mountains—to where Irma was being buried on the heights.

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